Update On The AIT*

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PREFACE

This book on the developing arguments concerning the Āryan Invasion Theory consists of adapted versions of papers I have read: the first at the World Association of *Ved*ic Studies (WAVES) conference on the Indus-Saraswatī civilization in Atlanta 1996, the third at the 1996 Annual South Asia conference in Madison, Wisconsin and in a lecture at the Linguistics Department in Madison; the fifth contains material used in my paper read at the second WAVES conference in Los Angeles 1998; the second and fourth were read at lectures for the Belgo-Indian Association, Brussels, and at the Etnografisch Museum, Antwerp. Overlaps have been kept to a minimum. Here and there, sections of my book *Indigenous Indians* (Voice of India 1993, outdated as far as the fast-moving Āryan invasion debate is concerned) have been reused in adapted form.

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The greatest hurdle has been my own anxiety in treading unsure ground, where every hypothesis which is now carrying the day may be blown away by a new discovery tomorrow. Even now, it hurts to release a book in mid-debate, knowing that much of it will be dated by the time a new consensus will have evolved. But then, I am confident that this painful awareness of uncertainty has been the right attitude and the best starting-point for uprooting the false certainties of some and for clearing the bewilderment of others. While too many debaters are still at base one, unfamiliar with the newest arguments and insufficiently alert to the strong and weak points of the several types of evidence in the balance, I hope this books helps the debate in moving on and reaching its conclusion.

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Chapter 1

Political Aspects of the Āryan Invasion Debate

1.1 POLITICIZING A LINGUISTIC THEORY

1.1.1 *Āryavarta* for the Āryan

Until the mid-19th century, no Indian had ever heard of the notion that his ancestors could be Āryan invaders from Central Asia who had destroyed the native civilization and enslaved the native population. Neither had South-Indians ever dreamt that they were the rightful owners of the whole subcontinent, dispossessed by the Āryan invaders who had chased them from North India, turning it into *Āryavarta*, the land of the Āryans. Nor had the low-caste people heard that they were the original inhabitants of India, subdued by the Āryans and forced into the prisonhouse of caste which the conquerors imposed upon them as an early form of Apartheid. All these ideas had to be imported by European scholars and missionaries, who thought through the implications of the Āryan Invasion Theory (AIT), the theory that the Indo-European (IE) language family had spread out from a given homeland, probably in Eastern Europe, and found a place in Western and Southern Europe and in India as cultural luggage of horse-borne invaders who subjugated the natives.

One of the first natives to interiorize these ideas was Jotirao Phule, India's first modern Mahatma, a convent-educated low-caste leader from Maharashtra. In 1873, he set the tone for the political appropriation of the AIT: "Recent researches have shown beyond a shadow of doubt that the Brahmins were not the Aborigines of India (...) Aryans came to India not as simple emigrants with peaceful intentions of colonization, but as conquerors. They appear to have been a race imbued with very high notions of self, extremely cunning, arrogant and bigoted." [1] Ever since, the political reading of the AIT

[1] J. Phule: *Slavery* (1873), republished by the Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai 1991, as vol.1 of

has become all-pervasive in Indian textbooks as well as in all kinds of divisive propaganda pitting high and low castes, North and South Indians, speakers of Indo-Āryan and of Dravidian languages, and tribals and non-tribals, against each other.

Today, out of indignation with the socially destructive implications of the politically appropriated AIT, many Indian scholars get excited about supposed imperialist motives distorting the views of the Western scholars who first introduced the AIT. They point to the Christian missionary commitment of early sankritists like Friedrich Max Müller, John Muir and Sir M. Monier-Williams and of dravidologists like Bishop Robert Caldwell and the Reverend G. U. Pope, alleging that the missionaries justify their presence in India by claiming that Āryan Hinduism is as much a foreign import as Christianity. They quote Viceroy Lord Curzon as saying that the AIT is "the furniture of Empire", and explain how the British colonisers justified their conquest by claiming that India had never been anything but booty for foreign invaders, and that the Indians (or at least the upper-caste Hindus who led the Freedom Movement) were as much foreigners as their fellow-Āryans from Britain. [2]

About the use of the AIT in the service of colonialism, there can be no doubt. Thus, during the 1935 Parliament debates on the Government of India Act, Sir Winston Churchill opposed any policy tending towards decolonization on the following ground: "We have as much right to be in India as anyone there, except perhaps for the Depressed Classes [= the *Scheduled Castes and Tribes*, who are the native stock." [3] So, the British Āryans had as much right to *Āryavarta* as their *Ved*ic fellow-Āryans. Indian loyalists justified the British presence on the same grounds, e.g. Keshab Chandra Sen, leader of the reformist movement Brahmo Samāj (mid-19th century), welcomed the British advent as a reunion with his Āryan cousins: "In the advent of the English nation in India we see a reunion of parted cousins, the descendants of two different families of the ancient Aryan race" [4].

However, it doesn't follow that the AIT was conceived with these political uses as its deliberate aim. The scholars concerned were children of their age, conditioned by prevalent perceptions and prejudices, but they sincerely believed that this theory explained the available data best.

Collected Works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule, p.xxix-xxx.

[2] A survey of British colonial thought about the Āryan theory is given in Thomas R. Trautmann: *Aryans and British India*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1997; see also the review by C. A. Bayly: "What language hath joined", *Times Literary Supplement*, 8-8-1997. See also Christine Bolt: *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, Routledge & Kegan, London 1971.

[3] Reproduced in C. H. Philips ed.: *Select Documents on the History of India and Pakistan*, part IV, OUP, London 1962, p-315.

[4] *Keshub Chunder Sen's Lectures in India*, p. 323, quoted by Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 8.

1.1.2 Hitler's Āryans

Even the 19th-century race theories which would feature so dramatically in crimes against humanity in 1941-45 were not originally conceived as political ploys. In the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, most of their theorists genuinely thought that the race concept provided the best explanation for the incoming data of nascent sciences like sociology and anthropology. Nonetheless, the disruptive effects of their work have reached beyond Europe as far as India.

In the proliferating race theories of the late 19th and early 20th century, "Āryan", an early synonym of "Indo-European" (IE), became a racial term designating the purest segment of the White race. Of course, the identification of "white" with "Āryan" was an innovation made by armchair theorizers in Europe, far from and in stark disregard for the self-described *Ārya*s in India. Better-informed India-based Britons like Rudyard Kipling summed up the Indian type as "Āryan brown".

Incorporated in the theme of Āryan whiteness, the AIT became a crown piece in Adolf Hitler's vision of white supremacy: here was the proof of both white superiority and of the need to preserve the race from admixture with inferior darker races. Had not the white Āryan invaders of India subdued the vastly more numerous brown-skinned natives, and had they not lost their superior white quality by mixing with the natives and becoming more brown themselves? In the Nazi view, the Āryan invaders had retained a relative superiority vis-à-vis the pure black natives by means of the caste system, but had been too slow in instituting this early form of Apartheid, so that their type was fatally contaminated with inferior blood.

One of Hitler's admirers, Mrs. Maximiani Portas alias Savitri Devi Mukherji, reports: "In the Third Reich, even schoolchildren knew from their textbooks that this [= the Aryan] race had spread from the north to the south and east, and not the other way around."[5] Establishment historians in Nazi Germany, such as Hermann Lommel, were quite explicit about their doctrine that "by invading India, the Aryans, powerful conquerors, have violated the culture which had been established there".[6] The subjugation of the black natives of India by the white Āryan invaders was, in the *Rassenkunde* ("racial science") courses in Nazi schools, the clearest illustration of the superiority of the white and especially the Āryan race.

1.1.3 Hindu and Āryan

The "Āryan" theme failed to kindle any sympathy in Hitler for the brown Āryans of India. He spurned the collaboration offer by freedom fighter and leftist Congress leader Subhash Chandra Bose because he preferred India to be under white British domination. And he

[5] Savitri Devi Mukherji: *Souvenirs et Refléxions d'une Aryenne*, Delhi 1976, p. 273.

[6] Quoted by André van Lysebeth: *Tantra, Le Culte de la Féminité*, Flammarion, Fribourg 1988, p. 24, from Hermann Lommel: *Les anciens Aryens*, Gallimard, Paris 1943.

ordered the extermination of the Gypsies, Indian immigrants into Europe. Nonetheless, anti-Hindu polemicists cleverly exploit the ambiguity of the term "Āryan" to associate Hindus with Hitler.

Consider this crassly false statement by a leading Marxist historian about the reform movement Ārya Samāj, founded in 1875 and well-known for its anti-untouchability campaigns: "The Arya Samaj was described by its followers as 'the society of the Aryan race'. The *Ārya*s were the upper castes and the untouchables were excluded."[7] The second sentence is precisely the Western indologist reading of the term *Ārya* which the Ārya Samāj sought to *counter*: The Samāj restored the original meaning of the term, viz. "civilized", in particular "belonging to or expressive of the *Ved*ic civilization".[8] While the Samāj was not slow in acknowledging that in its own day, the untouchables were being excluded from learning the *Ved*ic rituals and philosophies, it worked hard to *undo* this exclusions.[9]

As for the first sentence quoted, it is not known to me where a Samāj spokesman called his own organization "the society of the Āryan race". It is quite impossible that the term was ever used in the sense in which the quoter wants the reader to understand it, viz. in the Hitlerian sense. However, it is not altogether impossible that the expression was used, because in those days the word "race" in English (as opposed to German and post-1945 English) had a more general, non-biological and non-racist meaning, viz. "nation, people".

Sri Aurobindo, for one, has definitely used the term "Āryan race", thereby not meaning what Hitler and post-Hitlerian readers will understand by that term, but "Hindu nation". For all his "Āryan race" talk, Aurobindo was among the most clear-sighted analysts of the problem which Nazism posed. In 1939, Aurobindo advocated India's total support to the Allied cause as a matter of principle, because he saw in Hitler a force of evil; this at a time when many Indians, both Hindu and Muslim, were very fond of Hitler, and when others advocated participation in the British war effort on purely tactical grounds. On 19 September 1940, he briefly broke his self-imposed seclusion to make a public statement: "We feel that not only is this a battle waged in just self-defence and in defence of the nations threatened with the world domination of Germany and the Nazi system of life, but that it is a defence of civilization (...) To this cause our support and sympathy will be unswerving whatever may happen; we look forward to the victory of Britain and, as the eventual result, an era of peace and union among the nations".[10]

On one occasion, already in 1914, Aurobindo did express his doubts about the term "race" as follows: "I prefer not to use the term race, for race is a thing much more difficult to determine than is usually imagined. In dealing with it the trenchant distinctions current

[7]Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics", *Social Scientist*, Delhi, January-March 1996, p.s.

[8]The term is still used in that sense in the Constitution of the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal, which enjoins the King to "uphold Āryan culture".

[9]For a first acquaintance with the Ārya Samāj and the causes it fought for, see J. T. F. Jordens: *Swami Shraddhananda, His Life and Causes*, CUP, Delhi 1981.

[10]Sri Aurobindo: *India's Rebirth*, Institut de Recherches Evolutives, Paris 1993, p. 228. For his views on Nazism, see also *op.cit.*, p. 206, 209, 210, 221.

in the popular mind are wholly out of place."[11] At any rate, when he and other Hindus used the expression "Āryan race", they meant something totally unrelated to Nazism, for both terms had a meaning totally distinct from their Nazi interpretation.[12] To quote Hindus as speaking of the "Āryan race" without explaining the semantic itinerary of the expression is tantamount to manipulating the readership into reading something into the phrase which Ārya Samāj spokesmen and Aurobindo never intended. To Hindus, *Ārya*, or "Āryan" in English texts, simply means "Hindu", nothing more, nothing less.

1.1.4 Indo-Europe and the Nouvelle Droite

The positive association of the IE theme with racist or Nazi ideas is quite dead in Europe except in a few extremely marginal groups. It is not really present in the main focus of contemporary ideological interest in the IE past, the French intellectual current known as the Nouvelle Droite ("New Right").[13] By the 1980s, this movement, ultra-rightist in the 1960s, had shifted from "race" to "culture", from authoritarianism to participatory democracy, from crude nationalism to the celebration of multicultural difference (e.g. its leading ideologue, Alain de Benoist, was one of the rare French intellectuals to support the right of Muslim girls to wear the *hijab* in school). The Nouvelle Droite shows a sincere interest in and respect for traditional cultures, though sometimes forcing them conceptually into the mould of its own pet concerns. In contrast with the mushrooming xenophobic parties, it believes in European integration and seeks to underpin it with an awareness of pan-European cultural identity, hence its interest in the IE cultural heritage.[14]

Unlike the Left with its nostalgia for the victorious 40s, which it tries to recreate by perennially invoking the bogey of "renascent Fascism", the Right has had to learn from its defeat and move on. So, the focus is not on some "Āryan race" anymore, but on "Indo-European culture" as reconstructed by modern philologists.

One of the better known IE motifs is the theory of trifunctionality elaborated by Georges Dumézil. The idea is that PIE (Proto-IE) society had a tripolar worldview, which it applied to cosmology (Sanskrit *triguṇa*: the transparent, turbid and dark energies) as well as to society. The three social functions were identified as spiritual-intellectual, martial-political, and productive-economic, the medieval *oratores*, *bellatores*, *laboratores* (worship-

[11] Sri Aurobindo: *India's Rebirth*, p. 104.

[12] Sri Aurobindo was also a critic of the AIT, e.g. in an appendix on IE-Dravidian relations in his book *The Secret of the Veda*. His line of argument has been developed further in a meritorious booklet by Michel Danino and Sujata Nahar: *The Invasion that Never Was*, Mira Aditi Centre, Mysore 1996.

[13] Not to be confused with the Anglo-Saxon Reaganite-Thatcherite *New Right* tendency of the 1980s: the *Nouvelle Droite* is, among other things, anti-American, anti-capitalist, and pro-multiculturalist. By far the best English-language introduction to the Nouvelle Droite is the winter 1993-94 issue of the American periodical *Telos*. A political manifesto of the Nouvelle Droite was published in its quarterly *Eléments*, February 1999.

[14] The very idea that IE heritage could include other cultural items beside language is argued and pleasantly illustrated in Shan M. M. Winn: *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness. The Indo-European Roots of Western Ideology*, University Press of America, Lanham MD 1995.

pers, fighters, workers), or in Indian caste terms: *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*. Apart from the questions whether this scheme is typically IE (which is doubtful) and whether it effectively applied to ancient IE societies (where four-fold divisions are more common), it is not clear what its relevance to modern politics could be.

Further, it is strange that European patriots put all their eggs in the IE basket, when ancient European culture had important non-IE tributaries (Megalithic, VinCa, et al), of which the Basque language is the only linguistic remnant. And not only is Europe a plural entity, but "IE culture" itself was probably never a homogeneous unity, nor was it necessarily all that distinct from neighbouring cultures (e.g. the Scythians were Iranian-speaking but were feared and loathed by the sedentary Iranians, and resembled the non-IE Turks in religion and lifestyle). Indeed, of IE motifs like trifunctionality, as of IE myths like that of the dragon-slayer (*Indra*), it could be argued that they are not coterminous with the IE world, and perhaps even that some of them are just universal.

If IE is the basis of European identity, one can understand that a European Urheimat [15] for IE would be preferred over an Asian one. [16] Consequently, some of the Nouvelle Droite authors are very attached to the idea of the Āryan Invasion as a necessary implication of the presumed European character and origin of the IE family.

1.1.5 The Nouvelle Droite on Race and the Āryan Invasion

As a corollary to their Eurocentric view of IE history, Nouvelle Droite authors tend to accept the AIT and, along with it, the view of the caste system as an Apartheid system between IE immigrants and Indian natives, possibly because they have no reason to rethink the specifically Indian chapter of IE history. The net result is that in spite of their declared anti-racism, they end up reconnecting with 19th-century racist assumptions, at least as far as India is concerned.

The chief sources for Nouvelle Droite musings about India are the late Jean Varenne, an eminent indologist who was less outspoken on the present debate, and Jean Haudry, sanskritist and IE linguist, who by contrast has involved himself quite strongly in this debate. Haudry, member of the Scientific Committee of the French national-populist party Front National, maintains that the Proto-Indo-Europeans were tall, blue-eyed, fair-haired, long-skulled and straight-nosed. [17] Of course, he supports the AIT: "The *Veda*s and *Brāhmāṇa* s mention the Āryan invasion in India" (actually, they don't), and: "It is probable that the

[15] [Ur-Heimat = "Original Homeland" (Germanism).]

[16] A defence of the European Urheimat hypothesis is given by Jean Haudry and Alain de Benoist in the Nouvelle Droite periodical *Nouvelle Ecole*, 1997 (issue title *Les Indo-Européens*), along with an exhaustive survey of the development of the field of IE studies. it was praised sky-high for its completeness by Edgar Polomé (who is a member of the periodical's patronage committee) in the review section of the *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, spring-summer 1997. The 1995 issue of *Nouvelle Ecole* was devoted to the theme of "Tradition", with articles on the IE heritage in India, academically sound but of course full of the Āryan-Dravidian opposition and the inevitable Āryan invasion.

[17] Jean Haudry: *Les Indo-Européens*, PUF, Paris 1985, p. 122-124.

Āryans left from the site of Jamna on the Volga" and that some of them "came to India where they first arrived towards the beginning of the second millennium BC".[18]

There are frequent allegations, generally exaggerated but sometimes true, of unsavoury connections between the Nouvelle Droite and certain veterans of the Nazi and Fascist regimes. The Marxist critic Maurice Olender claims that one of the original patrons of the Nouvelle Droite publication *Nouvelle Ecole* was Herbert Jankuhn, once an officer of the SS research department, and that the movement also republishes Indo-europeanist studies by Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss and Hans F. K. Günther, editors of the Nazi periodical *Rasse* ("Race").[19]

In a "right of reply" which the Paris Appeals Court forced the periodical to publish (February 1994), Nouvelle Droite ideologue Alain de Benoist denied the allegation and listed his own publications in which he had argued against all forms of racism, defended democracy against its critics, deconstructed Western ethnocentrism, and criticized totalitarianism, nationalism, social darwinism and sociobiology.[20] He also pointed out that his periodical *Krisis*, which Olender had described as "extreme-Rightist", has published many Leftist authors who never felt they were in bad company.[21] The antagonism between Left and Right is indeed giving way to new political fault-lines.

On the other hand, if we just stick with the information which Nouvelle Droite publications themselves furnish, it is undeniable that there are some personal connections with the pre-1945 Right. Thus, among the members of the patronage committee of *Nouvelle Ecole*, we find not only scholars above suspicion, like Manfred Mayrhofer, Edgar Polomé, Colin Renfrew, the late Arthur Koestler or the late Marija Gimbutas, but also the famous scholar Mircea Eliade, who had been close to the fascist Iron Guard in his homeland Rumania. That Herbert Jankuhn was a member of the patronage committee is also uncontroversial.

My own impression is that the Nouvelle Droite is by and large a respectable intellec-

[18] J. Haudry: *Les Indo-Européens*, p. 114.

[19] "Au panthéon de la Nouvelle Droite", Maurice Olender interviewed in *L'Histoire*, October 1992, p. 48-51. Reference is, among others, to the republication of Hans F. K. Günther: *Religiosité Indo-Européenne*, Pardès, Puiseaux 1987 (1934), with a foreword by the Belgian Rightist ideologue Robert Steuckers, who tries to whitewash Günther from his reputation of being "Hitler's official anthropologist". On closer reading, we find that Günther's occasional criticism of Nazi policies hardly exonerates him, e.g. he opposed the equal allotment of social security benefits to all Germans regardless of their degree of racial "fitness" (p. 12). Of course, Günther also assumes the Āryan invasion of India.

[20] Reference is to A. de Benoist's books *Racismes, Antiracismes* (with Pierre-André Taguieff, Julien Freund et al.), Klincksieck 1984; *Democratie: le Probléme*, Labyrinthe 1985; and *Europe, Tiers-Monde, Même Combat*, Laffont 1986.

[21] It is telling how even a Rightist has to invoke Leftist company to gain respectability. The well-known French Leftist author Régis Debray, former fellow-traveller of Che Guevara, has remarked that "there is no life left in the French intellectual scene" (that much is true) "except in the Nouvelle Droite". This Left-Right collaboration was the target of a Leftist campaign in 1993, appealing to all institutions and media to boycott the Nouvelle Droite. The campaign, led by Roger-Pol Droit, author of a meritorious book on the decline of India's stature in Western thought during the 19th century (*L'Oubli de l'lnde*, Paris 1989), backfired: the targeted authors published a counter-statement condemning the witch-hunt, and many of the signatories of the campaign withdrew their own signature.

tual movement of the Right, but that precisely this respectability makes it attractive as an umbrella for nostalgics of the 1930s, for IE romantics, as well as for plain crackpots. The same phenomenon is in evidence in related movements throughout Europe: their periodicals present a curious mixture of healthy non-conformism and sarcasm vis-à-vis the dominant "political correctness", often in the form of thoughtful and original critiques, with deplorable flare-ups of obsolete race thinking and starry-eyed "traditionalism", i.e. a dogmatic kind of nostalgia for pre-modern culture.

The main problem with the Nouvelle Droite in the present context is that it continues to see other cultures, and India in particular, through the ideological lenses developed by European thinkers in the 19th century. The Nouvelle Droite people, rather than acquaint themselves with the reality of other cultures, often prefer to stay with their own coloured versions of them, e.g. René Guénon's explanation of Taoism rather than living Taoism.[22] This is the way to remain stuck in Eurocentric theories of bygone days, which is more or less the story of the whole pro-AIT argument.

1.1.6 Fondness for caste

The caste system as a religiously sanctioned hierarchical organization of society has exerted a fascination on Western nostalgics who felt lost in the modern world and longed for a kind of restoration of the pre-modern world. Among these nostalgics, one of extraordinary stature was certainly Julius Evola (1898-1974), an Italian aristocrat and an independent Rightist ideologue who, after years on the margin, ingratiated himself with the Fascist regime by developing a "truly Italian" version of the Race Theory, "more spiritual than the purely biological German Rassenlehre". Thus, he rejected biological determinism in favour of will-power, preferring chivalrous values like courage over the modern rigid bio-materialist subjection of man to the verdict of his genes. On the other hand, his occasional conflicts with the ideologues and the authorities of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, now eagerly highlighted by his remaining followers, hardly suffice to make him acceptable, e.g. there is no excuse for his writing a foreword to the Italian translation of the anti-Semitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Though a declared racist, his views were at odds with those of most White racists, e.g. he glorified Asian cultures because of their hierarchy and traditionalism, esp. the martial virtues as preserved (or so Western romantics thought) in imperial Japan.[23] He professed a premodern aristocratic "horizontal racism": the European aristocracy was one

[22] René Guénon: *La Grande Triade*, Gallimard, Paris 1980 (1957). Remark how the basic division in three, deemed typical of IE culture, is presented here through Chinese philosophy (heaven, atmosphere, earth, corresponding with the Hindu triad *sattva*/transparent, *rajas*/turbid, *tamas*/dark), an unwitting argument against the exclusively IE character of "trifunctionality". As the chief ideologue of "traditionalism", Guénon also wrote about Hinduism: *L'Homme et son Devenir selon le Vedānta*, and *Etudes sur l'Hindouisme*.

[23] Sometimes, Evola did make straight pleas for the white racist case, e.g. in an article against racial integration in the USA: "L'Amérique négrifiée", in J. Evola: *L'Arc et la Messue*, Guy Trédaniel/Pardes, Paris 1983 (1971), p. 31-39.

"race" bound to intermarry, the common people were the other "race", with national borders and identities being less important. After being hit during a bombardment in Vienna at the end of World War 2, he spent his last thirty years in a wheelchair, writing political-cultural essays and fairly accurate but always "traditionalist" accounts of Oriental religions.

Evola is interesting because he presented a premodern (and anti-modern) viewpoint, a living fossil in the 20th century. Those who have been duped by the dominant Marxist discourse into classifying Fascism as Rightist would do well to study Evola's Rightist critique of Fascism. He attacked Fascism on the following points: its anti-traditionalism and zest for newness and youth (as exemplified by its term Duce/"leader", i.e. one who takes the people to a distant goal, a utopia, as opposed to the premodern "ruler" who merely maintains the existing order); its superficial modernist optimism (best seen in Fascist, Nazi, Stalinist and Maoist visual art); its equalizing "Jacobin" nationalism which minimizes class differences; its totalitarianism, as opposed to premodern culture's sense of measure and division of powers; its secularism, which creates an opposition between the political and the sacred; its socialism; its personality cult (one ought to revere the institution of kingship, not the person of the king); and its natalist policy based on the vulgar cult of numbers, neglecting quality for the sake of quantity.[24]

In the absence of a living traditional society, some moderns like Evola have tried to recreate a sense of tradition, called *traditionalism* (term launched by his contemporary René Guénon), but this is often distortive. The whole traditionalist movement, including most of its votaries whom I have personally known, is characterized by a rigid attachment to certain typically modern (though anti-modernist) Western concerns, leading to great distortions in its numerous attempts to link up with ancient European or contemporary Asian traditions and surviving traditional societies.

Among the projections of European intellectual fashions onto other societies was of course the racialist understanding of the caste system. Thus, Mrs. Maximiani Portas (1905-82), a French-Greek lady, converted to Hinduism on the assumption that the Hindu caste system was an institution imposed by the Āryan race on the non-Āryan natives, so that the upper castes had preserved the ancient Āryan race and culture till today (for more about her, see 1.4.9 below).

A related distortion was Evola's assumption that the spiritual caste is subordinate to the martial caste, an assumption which he maintained even in the analysis of a *Ved*ic ritual in which the king "marries" his priest.[25] The traditional and *Ved*ic view is that worldly action is subordinate to contemplation, so that ritually, the king is the bride and the priest is the groom. Evola turned this upside down, affirming the primacy of the royal function: partly, this was an exaggerated exaltation of the martial function typical of the interbellum period (when marching in uniform was an almost universal style for all kinds of movements,

[24] J. Evola: *Le Fascisme Vu de Droite*, Totalité, Paris 1981.

[25] J. Evola: *Rivolta contra il Mondo Moderno*, Milan 1934, p. 105; I have used the French translation: *Révolte contre le Monde Moderne*, Editions de l'Homme, Ottawa/Brussels, p. 115ff.

due to the militarization of a whole generation in World War 1); partly, it was a projection of a medieval conflict in the Holy Roman Empire between the Emperor and the Pope, a conflict in which Evola's retrospective sympathies lay with the Emperor.

At any rate, it took a top-ranking scholar genuinely rooted in a genuine tradition, the Brahmin art historian and philosopher Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, to correct the deviations of the Western enthusiasts of "Tradition". He commented: "As it is, Evola's argument for the superiority of the Regnum, the active principle, to the Sacerdotium, the contemplative principle, is a concession to that very 'mondo moderno' [= modern world] against which his polemic is directed." [26] But the problem with the Traditionalist school is that they never listen: why should they listen to an Oriental scholar, when they already have Evola's or Guénon's version of Oriental wisdom?

So, the subordination of genuine Asian tradition to the pet concerns of some Western seekers and weirdos has continued. The late Frithjof Schuon, a Traditionalist who (like Guénon) converted to Islam, finding it the best embodiment of the "perennial wisdom", has written a eulogy of the caste system: "Like all sacred institutions, the caste system is based on the very nature of things (...) To justify the caste system, it is enough to ask this question: do heredity and diversity of qualities exist? If yes, the caste system is possible and legitimate." [27] Yet, it must be said in his favour that he takes a nuanced view, valuing egalitarianism as well, viz. as a natural implication of the fact that apart from difference in qualities, all human beings also have something in common: their immortal soul. Moreover, he has partly abandoned the racial view of caste: "Even the Hindu castes, originally purely Indo-European, could not be limited to a race: there are Tamil, Balinese, Siamese Brahmins." [28]

Even more recently, a passionate defence of caste has been published by the late Alain Daniélou, musicologist and India-lover of socialist persuasion and homosexual inclination. Like many orientalists before him, he had a distorted perception of Hindu culture, transparent of his own likes and dislikes, e.g. greatly exaggerating the degree of sexual freedom or permissiveness in Hindu society. He considered the caste system as a primitive but highly effective form of guild socialism.

Daniélou's book *Histoire de l'Inde* includes an imaginative processing of the AIT in all its implications, describing how the white Āryans subdued the dark natives and forced them into the menial castes, etc. His book *Les Quatre Sens de la Vie* (*"The Four Meanings of Life"*) is a passionate plea for the caste system conceived as a way to preserve the racial and cultural identities of different ethnic groups. [29] It remains odd, though, to read a glorification of caste by a Westerner who will never have to live in that system. Should it not

[26] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi 1978 (1942), p. 2.

[27] Frithjof Schuon: *Castes et Races*, Arché, Milan 1979, p. 7.

[28] Frithjof Schuon: *Castes et Races*, p. 37.

[29] Daniélou: *Histoire de l'Inde*, Fayard, Paris 1983 (1971); *Les Quatre Sens de la Vie: La Structure Sociale de l'Inde Traditionnelle*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris 1984 (1975).

be possible to appreciate certain historical merits of the caste system (e.g. its decentralized structure which helped Hindu society to survive centuries of Islamic occupation) without going all the way in glorifying it?

Daniélou was an associate of the late Swami Karpatri, a pure Hindu traditionalist whose pro-caste political party, the Ram Rajya Parishad, occupied a few seats in the Indian Parliament in the 1950s and 60s. Note, however, that real Hindu traditionalists with a purely traditional Sanskrit-medium education uphold caste without believing in the invasionist or racial theory of caste. Till today, quite a few of them have not even *heard* of the AIT.

1.1.7 Āryan racism today

An unquestioning faith in the AIT, not in some sophisticated or sanitized modern form but in its unadulterated racist version, is still in evidence in ultra-Rightist fringe groups. Consider the following lament by a Belgian critic of Peter Brooke's theatre version of the *Mahābhārata*: "Incomprehensible and shocking is that some major roles have been played by actors of African origin. It is certainly commendable to include Italians, Englishmen etc., but *Africans*? Nothing in the epic permits such a deviation. Let there be no mistake about it: the *Mahābhārata* is not an epic written for some entity called humanity. It is a narrative by and for the *Ārya*s as an Indo-European caste which had imposed its authority in India".[30]

The man seems unaware that "Āryan" *Mahābhārata* protagonists like *Kṛṣṇa* and *Draupadi*, as well as some of the *Ved*ic *rsi*s, are explicitly described as dark-skinned while nearly all upper-caste Hindus are at least black-haired, a far cry from the *Blond Beast* (to borrow Friedrich Nietzsche's sarcastic term) which was the white racists' idea of the Āryan Superman.[31]

The far-Right French monthly *Rivarol* still analyzes Indian politics, including the Lok Sabha elections of February 1998, in racial terms. Its commentator makes fun of the plight of Western Leftists who, supposedly anti-racist and anti-colonial, feel constrained to oppose the allegedly "rightist" BJP with its programme of cultural decolonization, and to support the anti-BJP alliance led by Sonia Gandhi, a beneficiary of an alleged Indian racial prejudice: "In the West, India's election campaign has been reduced to the presence of Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi's widow, presented as the bulwark against the expected gains of the BJP, considered as sectarian, facist and anti-Muslim. However, the anti-racist supporters of the pretty Italian are forgetting a decisive factor in her unusual popularity (. . .): the whiteness of her skin. Living in the myth of Āryan superiority, the Indians,

[30] Ralf van den Haute: "Le Mahābhārata ou la mémoire la plus longue", *L'Anneau* (Brussels), #22-23 (1993).

[31] When I communicated the present criticism to him in November 1998, Mr. Van den Haute replied that he had already changed his mind after actually reading a *Mahābhārata* translation. He maintained nonetheless that Peter Brooke had only included Africans in his cast because "this would please the commissars of political correctness who control the subsidy purse strings".

including those from the south, are obsessed with paleness: the paler your skin colour, the better your chances of finding a job or a marriage partner. So, the fascination for Sonia is largely an Aryan fascination!"[32]

Significantly, no such comments have appeared in the Indian press, much less in the Hindu nationalist press (where Sonia is denounced as an agent of the Vatican and derided as the "white elephant" and "the shroud of Turin") or in Indian anti-AIT publications. To Hindu nationalists, *paleface* does not mean "Āryan"; if anything, it could only connote "neocolonialist". Meanwhile, Sonia Gandhi's first year in office as Congress Party leader (1998) undeniably gave her a fast-increasing popularity in spite of her poverty in ideas and leadership.

The foregoing examples show that the political reading of the AIT in terms of 19th-century colonial conceptions is not entirely dead yet in Europe. But at least, it has been definitively marginalized. Though noteworthy as a tenacious relic of the world-view of a bygone age, it is now without political importance, nor does it have a presence in the academic world (the above-mentioned Prof. Jean Haudry has retired, and his institute for IE studies in Lyon is being closed down). The only consequential political motive for Western academics to uphold the AIT is not a lingering commitment to colonial causes, but solidarity with their Indian counterparts who have their own reasons for defending the AIT against its challengers. By contrast, Indian political readings of the AIT still weigh heavily on the present-day political climate of that country.

1.2 THE ĀRYAN INVASION THEORY IN INDIAN POLITICS

1.2.1 The AIT and the "anti-national forces"

There are quite a few cases worldwide of late-medieval and modern history having repercussions on contemporary politics, witness the role of bad memories in ex-Yugoslavia. By contrast, I do not know of any question of *ancient* history which is as loaded with actual political significance as is the AIT in India. The AIT was turned into a political tool in order to question the Indian identity of the Indians, and thereby weaken the claims of Indians to their own country. This political use of the AIT continues till today, especially at the hands of what Hindu nationalists call "the anti-national forces". Christian "liberation theologians", Islamic missionaries, assorted separatists and like-minded anti-Hindu or anti-India activists are still highlighting the AIT in order to:

1) Mobilize lower-caste people, supposedly the "subdued natives" forced into the Apartheid prisonhouse of caste by the invaders, against the upper-caste people, supposedly the progeny of the "invading Āryans". All this propaganda is carried out in the name of the low-caste leader Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, even though Ambedkar himself had strongly

[32] P. P. B.: "Elections indiennes: la longue marche des hindouistes", *Rivarol*, early March 1998.

rejected the AIT and the notion that caste status has a racial origin: "European students of caste (...), themselves impregnated by colour prejudices, very readily imagined it to be the chief factor in the Caste problem. But nothing can be farther from the truth, and Dr. Ketkar is right when he insists that "all the princes whether they belonged to the so-called Āryan race or to the so-called Dravidian race, were *Ārya*s. Whether a tribe or a family was racially Āryan or Dravidian was a question which never troubled the people of India until foreign scholars came in and began to draw the line." [33]

2) Mobilize Dravidian-speakers against speakers of IE languages, esp. through the Dravidian separatist movement which was started under British patronage in 1916 as the Justice Party, later refounded as the *Dravida Kazhagam*, and which reached its peak in the 1950s. One of its gimmicks was the glorification of the "black Dravidian" hero *Rāvaṇa* against the "white Āryan" hero *Rāma*, disregarding the *Rāmāyaṇa* information that *Rāvaṇa* was actually an Āryan coloniser of Sri Lanka and a performer of *Ved*ic rituals, while *Rāma* was dark-skinned. [34] Its most consequential success was the sabotage (masterminded by the English-speaking elite in Delhi, not in the Dravidians' but in its own interest) of the implementation of the Constitutional provision that Hindi, a North-Indian IE language, replace English as official language by 1965.

3) Mobilize the tribals, who have been given the new name "aboriginals" (*Ādivāsī*) as part of this strategy, against the non-tribals, who are to be treated on a par with the European invaders of America and Australia. This in spite of the demonstrable foreign (East-Asian) origin of the Munda and Tibeto-Burmese languages spoken by the most vocal tribes.

4) Mobilize Indian politicians towards delegitimizing Sanskrit, that "foreign language brought by the Āryan invaders", as India's culture language and as a school subject, in order to further dehinduize India and weaken her cultural unity: "Sanskrit should be deleted from the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution because it is a foreign language brought to the country by foreign invaders - the Āryans." [35]

5) Mobilize world opinion against the "racist Āryans", meaning the Hindus, since they

[33] Thus spake Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his paper "Castes in India", reproduced in his *Writings and Speeches*, Gvt. of Maharashtra, 1986, vol. 1, p. 21, with reference to S. V. Ketkar: *History of Caste in India*, Low Price Publ., Delhi 1990 (1909), p. 82. Though he condemned the Hindu caste system in the strongest terms and ended up converting to Buddhism, Dr. Ambedkar shared may doctrinal points with the Hindu nationalists, often even being more outspoken than they: he was a merciless critic of Islam, opposed the conversion of low-castes to foreign religions, ridiculed Mahatma Gandhi's extremist pacifism and religious fantasizing, lambasted Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign policy, and rejected the AIT.

[34] Note the agreement between the Indian Left and the European racists. In his *L'arc de Civa. poèmes antiques*, the 19th-century French poet Charles Leconte de Lisle wrote: "*Rama, toi dont le sang est pur, toi dont le corps est blanc, (...) dompteur étincelant de toutes les races profanes*" ("*Rāma*, you whose blood is pure, you whose body is white, bright subduer of all the profane races"). In fact, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is about a struggle between two heroes who were both Āryan and both dark-skinned.

[35] Frank Anthony, a Christian former Member of Parliament, quoted with strong approval by Razia Ashraf, a Muslim protester against the Sanskrit news service on All-India Radio, in a letter to *Indian Express*, 9-2-1991.

are the "Āryan invaders who imposed the caste system as a kind of Apartheid to preserve their racial purity and dominance", never mind the fact that the association of "Āryan" with "race" is a strictly European invention unknown to Hindu tradition. Now that "idolater" and "heathen" have lost their force as swearwords, "racist" is a brilliant new way of demonizing Hinduism.

1.2.2 Crank racism

The explicit use of the AIT for political purposes is in evidence in a string of publications aimed at pitting the lower castes and the tribals against Hinduism, from Swami Dharma Theertha's *The Menace of Hindu Imperialism* (1941) to S. K. Biswas's *Autochthon of India and the Aryan Invasion* (1995).[36] It is most obvious in the militant anti-Brahmin movement spearheaded by the Bangalore fortnightly *Dalit Voice*, edited by V. T. Rajshekar, a former *Indian Express* journalist fired because of his links with Khalistani terrorism. This extremist wing of the broader *Dalit movement* ("Dalit" meaning "oppressed", ex-Untouchable)[37] has formulated an Indian variant of Afrocentric history, copied from the Black Muslims in the USA, with whom it co-operates closely.[38]

Thus, the theory of *continental drift*, first suggested by Abraham Ortelius in the 16th century, and formulated scientifically by Alfred Wegener in 1915, is harnessed to the cart of Dalit Afrocentrism: "The Dalits were the original inhabitants of India and resemble the African in physical features. It is said that India and Africa were one land-mass until separated by the ocean. So both the Africans and the Indian Untouchables had common ancestors."[39] Actually, the break-up of the *Urkontinent* Gondwanaland took place millions of years before mankind spread across the face of the earth.

More importantly, physical anthropology does not bear out the African connection of India's lowest castes: though their ancestors may well have migrated from Africa along with those of every other *homo sapiens*, they are racially far closer to the Indian upper castes than to the Africans. It does not even bear out the racial dividing-line between upper and lower castes: lower castes are genetically closer to the upper castes of their

[36] Swami Dharma Theertha's book has been republished as *History of Hindu Imperialism*, Dalit Educational Literature Centre, Madras 1992.

[37] The term *Dalit* as a social category was introduced by the Hindu reform movement Ārya Samāj in the late 19th century in its campaign for *dalitoddhāra*, "upliftment of the oppressed". Its English counterpart "depressed classes" was used by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as a more precise alternative to Mahatma Gandhi's religious term *Harijan*, "people of God", a term which has recently given way to Dalit or to the legal term *scheduled Caste* in ordinary usage.

[38] E.g. a few years ago, Black Muslims opposed the renaming of a street in Atlanta, Georgia, as *Mahatma Gandhi Square*, in deference to the hatred of the Mahatma's integrationist views by the polarizationist *Dalit Voice* group. It must be admitted, though, that they had a case in collecting all the statements by Gandhi (during his South-African period 1893-1914) which could be construed as derogatory to Blacks, see e.g. "Gandhi's anti-African racism", chapter 2 of Fazlul Huq: *Gandhi Saint or Sinner?*, Dalit Sahitya Akademy, Bangalore 1992.

[39] V. T. Rajshekar: *Dalit - the Black Untouchables of India*, Clarity Press, Atlanta 1987, p. 43.

own region than to people of the same caste rank in other parts of India.[40] A recent survey has yielded this conclusion: "Detailed anthropomorphic surveys carried out among the people of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal and Tamil Nadu revealed significant regional differences within a caste and a closer resemblance between castes of different *varṇa*s within a region than between sub-populations of the caste from different regions."[41] Yet, cranky as it is, *Dalit Voice* is strongly supported by militant Islamic centres, by Christian Liberation Theology circles and by many Western academics because they share its anti-Brahminism.[42] Their reason probably is that they share *Dalit Voice*'s motto: "What Hindus hate, we must love, and what Hindus love, we must hate."[43]

In fairness to the Dalit cause, it must be emphasized that *Dalit Voice* is not representative (and often diametrically opposed to the goals) of the broader Dalit movement as envisaged by Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956), a most necessary movement given the slackness of the other castes in implementing social reform. Thus, while Ambedkar became a Buddhist, *Dalit Voice* downplays the liberating message of Buddhism in favour of Christianity and Islam, religions criticized and rejected by Dr. Ambedkar.

1.2.3 Anti-Brahminism and anti-Semitism

Describing the Brahmins as the "Jews of India", V. T. Rajshekar combines anti-Brahminism with anti-Semitism: "Since the Brahminical Social Order [BSO] is much more ancient it is quite likely that the Zionist founding fathers got their inspiration from the BSO (. . .) *Dalit Voice* has thus proved right in predicting that the Jews and the 'Jews of India' will join hands to crush Muslims, Blacks and India's Dalits."[44] He publishes calls to "get a copy of the *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* from the Iranian embassy in Delhi to understand the Zionist hatred against Blacks and Muslims."[45]

Rajshekar also copies some of the classics of anti-Semitism: "The First World War, the Second World War, the establishment of Communism, the rise of Hitler, were also systematically planned and executed by Zionists."[46] With his sex scandal, Bill Clinton was the "victim of a Zionist conspiracy", for the Zionists, who "control the entire American

[40] This was already argued by Dr. Ambedkar, e.g. in *Writings and Speeches* (1989 ff.), vol.7, p. 301, with reference to G. S. Ghurye: *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai 1969 (1932). It is significant that the vast majority of the numerous publications on caste fail to mention Ghurye's important work even in their biblography; as for Ambedkar, his explicit rejection of the AIT-cum-racial explanation of caste goes equally unmentioned in the copious pro-Dalit and Indian Marxist literature.

[41] Kailash C. Malhotra interviewed by N. V. Subramaniam: "The way we are. An ASI project shatters some entrenched myths", *Sunday*, 10-4-1994.

[42] See e.g. the Flemish missionary monthly *Wereldwijd*, March 1986 and February 1991; some of V. T. Rajshekar's separately published brochures (from Dalit Sahitya Akademi, Bangalore) are transcripts of speeches given at Christian conferences.

[43] *Dalit Voice*, 16-2-1992.

[44] *Dalit Voice*, 16-2-1992.

[45] *Dalit Voice*, 1-12-1991.

[46] *Dalit Voice*, 16-1-1993.

politics, economy and the media as well", are "angry that Clinton refused to finish the 'demon' of Islam and render all-out support to Israel".[47] Rajshekar's constant railing against the *CIA-Zionist-Brahminical world conspiracy* has earned him a mention in a recent authoritative survey of contemporary anti-Semitism.[48]

Even apart from this confabulated conspiracy, an analysis of anti-Brahmin rhetoric shows that it is approximately, and in considerable detail, the Indian equivalent of anti-Semitism. Thus, Brahmins think they are the chosen ones; they (at least the orthodox) distinguish themselves by funny dress and hairstyle; they are cowards but past masters at manipulation and pitting outsiders against one another; they are pale bookworms with a transregional language of their own; they always help their own kind and deceive the others; and they monopolize wealth. For an early example, Jotirao Phule wrote: "The Brahmin's natural (instinctive) temperament is mischievous and cantankerous, and it is so inveterate that it can never be eradicated."[49]

Moreover, just as in the Nazi view the antagonism between Soviet "Judeo-Bolshevism" and American "Jewish plutocracy" was but a deceptive front for the omnipresent Jewish hand, the Indian conflict between traditionalist Brahmins and socialist Brahmins (e.g. the founders of the Communist Party of India, mostly Brahmins) is also a mere puppet-show masking the hand-in-glove cooperation between these two types of Brahmins.[50] Even their occasional shows of goodness and concern for the common good always turn out to be exercises in manipulation. And worst of all, as per the AIT, the Brahmins are *foreigners*, usurping the rightful inheritance of the sons of the soil.

This line of anti-Brahmin rhetoric on the model of anti-Semitism comes full circle with the following allegation, originally made in 1971 by K. K. Gangadharan, a Leftist sociologist from Maharashtra working in Christ College in Kanpur, and since then adopted by the likes of V. T. Rajshekar: the Chitpavan Brahmins, a caste in Maharashtra which immigrated from Afghanistan (hence their taller build and lighter colour) when that region was islamized in the 10th century, and which took a leadership role in the struggle against the Moghuls, the British Raj and Congress secularism, are so "arrogant" and "fanatical" because, unbeknownst to other Indians, they actually have Jewish ancestors![51]

That Brahmins monopolize wealth has even less basis in fact than the same stereotype of Jews. Brahmins always had an ideal of "simple living and high thinking", and observed

[47] Clinton, victim of Zionist conspiracy?" *Dalit Voice*, 1-9-1998.

[48] Léon Poliakov, ed.: *Histoire de l'antisémitisme 1945-93*, Paris 1994, p. 395. The phenomenon of anti-Semitism in a vocal though marginal and unrepresentative section of the Dalit movement is attributed somewhat patronizingly to the "mental confusion among India's poor Dalits".

[49] *Collected Works of Mahatma Jotirao Phule*, vol.2, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai 1992, p. 73, quoted with approval in *Dalit Voice*, 16-12-1992.

[50] See e.g. V. T. Rajshekar: *Dialogue of the Bhoodevatas. Sacred Brahmins versus Socialist Brahmins*, Dalit Sahitya Akademy, Bangalore 1993.

[51] K. K. Gangadharan is quoted to this effect in Gérard Heuzé: *Où va l'Inde moderne?*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1993, p. 87. As for V. T. Rajshekar to this effect, see *Dalit Voice*, 1-2-1995 and 1-3-1995; and V. T. Rajshekar: *Brahminism*, Dalit Sahitya Akademy, Bangalore n.d., p. 28.

a prohibition of "selling" their *Ved*ic knowledge and ritual status; Brahmins with lucrative posts counted *ipso facto* as lower in rank. Moreover, the traditional sources of wealth for certain Brahmin families have dried up (abolition of maharaja courts, nationalization or expropriation of temples) and today poverty is rampant among most non-westernized Brahmins. But it is easy to sell the notion that the ritually highest caste must also be the richest, esp. to Western audiences brought up on one-dimensional materialism.

However, the wealth aspect of anti-Semitism does find an Indian counterpart in the Baniā merchant caste, which in the past few centuries and particularly in the most islamized parts of the Subcontinent occupied exactly the same niche in society as the Jews in medieval Europe: often they were the only Hindus who could buy themselves the safety which allowed them to preserve their Hindu identity, and as non-Muslim money-lenders they were allowed to practise "usury", which is prohibited to Muslims. As a devout and vegetarian class, they are stereotypical Hindus, and at the same time they are a natural object of envy, just like their successful Hindu relatives in Britain and Africa. This makes them another excellent scapegoat for anti-"Āryan" crank racism in India, as exemplified by *Dalit Voice*'s regular tirades against the most famous Baniā, Mahatma Gandhi, and against the Baniā core constituency of the BJP.

1.2.4 Foreign support for anti-Brahminism

According to the politicized version of the AIT, the following is the grim truth about the situation of the pre-Āryan populations of India: "The Āryan invasion has been a disaster for India, just like for all the other Alpino-Mediterranean peoples invaded by the steppe nomads. Let us imagine that the Huns had overpowered us, destroyed our civilization, and that we would be their slaves till today, as well as our descendents for thousands of years to come, and we will understand the drama of the defeated Harappan civilization." [52] These are the words of a locally well-known Belgian yoga teacher, André van Lysebeth, someone who owes a lot to Hindu tradition and who is probably dubbed "that Hindu" by his neighbours. Yet, in attacking the Brahmins he is merciless.

The chief instrument of this racist enslavement was the caste system. In describing the horrors of caste, Mr. van Lysebeth has the good sense to draw attention to the two separate concepts of *jāti* (the thousands of actual endogamous communities) and *varṇa* (the theoretical four layers of society: *Brahmin*s, *Kṣhatriya*s, *Vaiśya*s, *Śūdra*s), which Europeans have lumped together in the Portuguese term *caste*. But the next thing he does is to re-equate them, this time as being both terms of racial purity: "The Sanskrit term *jāti*, which designates what we call the castes, means 'race', neither more nor less. It's simple, it's clear." [53] And: "The prime criterion of discrimination, purely racial, is *varṇa*, a Sanskrit word meaning colour (evidently of the skin)." [54] Actually, *jāti* has all

[52] André van Lysebeth: *Tantra, le Culte de la Féminité*, Flammarion Fribourg 1988, p. 59.
[53] A. van Lysebeth: *Tantra*, p. 46.
[54] *ibid.* p. 47

the meanings which the word "race" had in the 18^{th}-19^{th} century: kinship group, nation, race, species. Thus, *mānava-jāti* means "the human race", or more accurately, "the human species". And *varṇa*, "colour", has nothing to do with skin colour, but refers to symbolic colours allotted to the elements, the cardinal directions, and likewise also to the layers of society.

But the notion of caste as a form of racism is well-entrenched: "Compared with the imposed racism of the Aryans in India, the Apartheid in South Africa is a gentle joke, and I am weighing my words."[55] The villain of the piece is easily identificable: "Aryanized India is under the thumb of the racist Brahmins, smug and full of their superiority over all other human beings, even over all of creation."[56] They set the tone for all the ills of Hindu society: "Venality, hypocrisy, callous unconcern, are the characteristic traits of the Aryans, starting with the Brahmins."[57]

But Mr. van Lysebeth, who equates Brahminism with Hitlerism, sees the problem as even larger than India: "From India to Europe, the same drama has repeated itself everywhere. Leaving their icy steppes, from 3000 BC onwards nomadic plunderers invade the pre-Āryan civilizations, making the defeated natives their serfs. These barbarians were neither of pure race, nor superior, except in brute force. Everywhere they have destroyed civilizations." The only revenge left to the natives was to smuggle their own traditions, supposedly centred around a Mother Goddess cult, into the new orthodoxies as a counter-current against "the foreign patriarchal system, imported from the cold".[58] In this age of multiculturalism, we had just learned to scrap the word "barbarian" from our dictionaries, and that we should see the complex cultural motifs and structures even in the most illiterate and primitive cultures. But the Barbarian is back, and his name is Brahmin.

It is perfectly OK to say about Brahmins those things which anti-racist legislation has prohibited in many countries in the case of Blacks and others. Be that as it may, the remarkable point here is the zeal with which a Western yoga adept has thrown himself into the anti-"Āryan" struggle. That is how deep the AIT has moulded public opinion in an anti-Hindu sense: the very people whom you would expect to sympathize with India and with the community which has preserved ancient traditions through the millennia, have been enlisted in the opposite camp, for no other reason than their belief in the AIT and the concomitant racial understanding of caste.

The same thing is true of the Western Indology departments, where many professors share the positions of anti-Brahminism to a greater or lesser extent. In my student days in Leuven University's Asian Studies department, I saw students of Chinese develop into zealous defenders of the Chinese occupation of Tibet, and students of Islam become apologists of Islam. The Indology students, by contrast, never developed such feelings for Hinduism, and this was in large measure due to the negative light cast on Hinduism by its original

[55] *ibid.* p. 26
[56] *ibid.* p. 58
[57] *ibid.* p. 62
[58] *ibid.* p. 30

sin of the Āryan invasion and the "racist imposition of caste". Of course it is legitimate to criticize caste; but it is perverse to do so on the basis of false history.

1.2.5 The Āryan conspiracy

The anomaly that the Āryan invasion is the key event in Indian history but that no Hindu ever heard of it, has led to a new species of paranoia. Wherever an invasionist looks around in India, he will always see reminders of the devastating Āryan invasion. Often, these reminders are of an "occult" type: those who pass them on to future generations are not aware of their true meaning. It sounds like the story, popular among enthusiasts of the divinatory Tarot cards, that Egyptian Masters of Wisdom decided to encode their secret knowledge in the designs of ordinary playing-cards, so that man's propensity to play games would ensure the transmission of the ancient knowledge to future generations until such time as people would once more be worthy of being initiated into it. In the case of the Āryan invasion, the time has come: after 3000 years of silence and forgetfulness about the Āryan invasion, the secret has been uncovered, and the hidden meaning of all manner of cultural elements is finally being understood.

Thus, Malati Shendge claims that a number of hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda* were composed to celebrate the victory of the Āryans over the non-Āryans, while at the same time incorporating some of the traditional lore of the more civilized defeated non-Āryans. In her view, this explains the prohibition for Śūdras (low-caste people supposed to be the natives) of listening to *Ved*ic recitation: "The Shudras were especially debarred from the practice of the *Ved*ic religion. This was not so much for preserving the purity or the monopoly as for the fear which constantly haunted the Aryan mind and of which it could never be free, viz. the revolt of the non-Aryans leading to their (Aryan) expulsion from this land. Thus the Shudra was prohibited even from listening to the *Ved*ic literature simply because if he understood the basis of this religion he might rebel, jeopardizing the social peace. Secondly, if he understood the dirty trick that was played on him, i.e. the borrowal of the *Asura* lore and its transformation into an Āryan religion, he may once again be reminded of his past glory." [59]

One wonders why these natives, who vastly out-numbered the Āryans and lived their separate lives in their designated corner of the caste system, were unable to preserve the true story about the usurpation of their land and power by these foreign invaders. But then, gullible Westerners listening to the invasionist reinterpretation of Hindu lore by Indian agitators have been made to believe that the true story has effectively been preserved in the popular Tantrik tradition.

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[59] M. Shendge: *The Civilized Demons. The Harappans in the Rg-Veda*, Abhinav Publ. Delhi 1977, p. 378. *Asura* originally "god", since late-*Ved*ic times "demon", enemy of the *Deva*s or "gods". The shift is the result of a confrontation between Iranians, who mostly addressed their gods as *Asura*/*Ahura* (esp. *Ahura Mazda*), and Indians who mostly addressed their gods as *Deva*. On both sides, the enemy's term was forthwith demonized: *Asura* for Indians and *Daeva* for Iranians were turned from "god" into "demon".

Thus, Mr. van Lysebeth suspects that Hindu ritual and symbolism is all about the struggle between Āryan invaders and Dravidians. Even *Śiva*'s trident, now a symbol of militant Hinduism as well as a mystical symbol into which all manner of philosophical profundities have been read, is really a symbol of pre-Āryan resistance against the Āryan invaders: "India is a volcano where the pressure mounts under the crust constituted by the millennarian Āryan structure. (. . .) *Śiva*'s trident is 'officially' the three *guṇa*s [the three qualities: light, turbid, dark] of *Sāṃkhya* [= cosmological philosophy], or the three *nāḍi*s (subtle energy channels) of yoga. But for those who *know*, it is all different, for the trident was the preferred weapon of the Dravidians, while its Āryan counterpart had four teeth. The *Ṛg-Veda* says: 'With their four-pointed weapon (*caturaśri*) *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* kill the bearers of the trident.' The Indian Rajmohon Nath (. . .) comments on this verse: "This gives an indication of the ancient conflict between the two camps which still continues in India." [60]

Those who care to look up the *Ved*ic verse (1:152:2) will find that it merely says, in Ralph Griffith's literal translation, that "the fearful four-edged bolt smites down the three-edged". The passage as a whole is one of the many difficult points in *Ved*ic translation, and every modern translator has a different version; but though they are mostly well-grounded in the AIT, no serious translator has turned this passage into a reference to aboriginal tridents against invaders' quadridents. The most logical explanation available is the one given by the classical commentator Śāyana: in glorifying the might of the truth (*satya*) in the sage's power-word (*mantra*), mentioned in the first half of the verse, it is asserted in general (as if it were a well-known proverb at that time) that he who has more or stronger weapons defeats him who has fewer or less effective ones. [61]

As for the meaning of *triraśri*, which was translated as "(*Śiva*ite) trident", its dictionary meaning is simply "three-cornered" [62]; it is part of a series which includes *caturaśri* and even *śataśri*, "having a hundred angles or edges (said of the thunderbolt)". [63] There is no hint that the trident is meant. [64] More decisively, there is nothing un-Āryan about the trident, considering that it was an attribute of the Greco-Roman god *Poseidon/Neptune*, both names with IE etymologies. In Germanic and Celtic folk art, three-armed (*triskel*) and four-armed (*tetraskel*) variations of a given symbol (fylfot, swastika) coexist. That the three-armed version is anti-Āryan and the four-armed one pro-Āryan, is without foundation.

Likewise, Malati Shendge and others have made much of the *Ved*ic myth of the Dragon-slayer: *Indra* defeating the dragon *Vṛtra* would be the Āryan invader defeating the native

[60] A. van Lysebeth: *Tantra*, p. 211, with reference to Rajmohon Nath: *Rigveda Summary*, Shillong 1966, p-83.

[61] Ralph A.T. Griffith: *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, Motilal Banarsidass reprint, Delhi p. 102n.

[62] M. Monier-Williams: *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, entry *Trir-ashri*, p. 461.

[63] M. Monier-Williams: *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, entry *Śataśri*, p. 461.

[64] There are non-weapon interpretations, e.g. on the model of *śaḍyantra* (literally "six-pointed star" but effectively "conspiracy"), *triraśri* may, in opposition to *caturaśri* ("square"), have a connotation of "not (fair and) square" in a figurative sense. Swami Dayananda Saraswati (*Rigveda*, vol.3, p. 76) translates it as "wicked".

Vṛtra. Since this killing is associated with the release of the waters which were withheld by *Vṛtra*, it is also imagined that the Āryans had destroyed the impressive waterworks with which the Dravidian Harappans ensured the fertility of their lands. However, the myth of the Dragon-slayer is a pan-IE myth, even known among non-IE people like the Babylonians (*Marduk* defeating *Tiamat*). Have they all invaded Harappa and killed its chief water-engineer?

Mr. van Lysebeth was invited to attend a *Ved*ic fire ceremony (*agnihotra*) once, but those wily Brahmins were not able to deceive him: "They are careful not to tell us that it is in commemoration of the destruction of the enemies, the *Dāsa*s, that several ingredients are thrown into the fire, among which the grains symbolize the destruction of the harvest, the cities and the forts, nor [do they tell us] that the pieces of meat represent the enemies burned to death."[65] Is it not far-fetched to explain the ritual use of fire, which exists in a great many cultures that have flourished on earth, as a commemoration of the burning down of Harappan cities? And the ingredients of the offering as representing the enemies who were burnt alive in those genocidal bonfires? Especially when no traces of this Āryan campaign of burning and destruction have ever been discovered.

Numerous allegorical interpretations can be imposed on any text or symbol; in New Age bookstores, you can find books on the "esoteric meaning of fairy tales". But this is mostly just what the Germans call *Hineininterpretieren*, "interpreting meanings *into* the text". None of the authors imposing an invasionist interpretation on Hindu scriptures, rituals and symbols, has ever shown how their reading is anything more than just that. They are merely, as the saying goes, elated to discover the Easter eggs which they themselves have concealed.

1.2.6 Indian Marxism

Among the most active and determined academic opponents of any serious reopening of the AIT debate, we find Marxists such as Prof. Romila Thapar (whose positions will be discussed below) and Prof. Ram Sharan Sharma.[66] Let us make it clear from the outset that there is nothing controversial about the label "Marxist": in India, Marxism is still the dominant paradigm in the Humanities, and hundreds of academics are still proud to call themselves Marxists. It is therefore a bit bizarre when Romila Thapar insinuates that the non-AIT school merely uses the label "Marxist" as a cheap way to dismiss the Indian pro-AIT scholars like Sharma and herself without proper refutation: "Those that question their theories are dismissed as Marxists!"[67] If confirmation from an unsuspect Marxist source is needed, Tom Bottomore's standard dictionary of Marxism mentions and quotes

[65] André van Lysebeth: *Tantra*, p. 196. Similarly on p. 195, with reference to Malati J. Shendge: *The Civilized Demons: the Harappans in Rigveda.*

[66] See e.g. R. S. Sharma: *Looking for the Aryans*, Orient Longman, Delhi 1995, and the interview with him in a programme by the Dutch Hindu broadcasting foundation OHM, 1997.

[67] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 17.

both R. S. Sharma and Romila Thapar as representatives of Indian Marxism.[68]

The Marxist dominance of India's cultural sphere is not a convenient rumour, it can easily be documented and its genesis traced and explained. Nehru was fond of Communism though personally too bourgeois to join it. It was chiefly his daughter Indira Gandhi (guided by her secretary P. N. Haksar) who, when she was critically dependent on Communist support during her intra-Congress power struggle, promoted Communists (often unregenerate Stalinists till today) and created many new institutes for them, including Jawaharlal Nehru University. In 1975, when the Communist bid to take over the Congress Party from within was thwarted by Indira's son Sanjay Gandhi, the Communist power position in the intellectual sector was left untouched: its importance escaped the Gandhi family, who only focused on immediate political power. When in 1998, the new BJP Government nominated people of its own choice to the Indian Council of Historical Research, a roar of indignation went up among Indian Marxists against this "politicization of scholarship", highlighting to the alert observer the extent to which the Marxists themselves had treated the ICHR as their own playground, and how, like spoilt children, they couldn't stand losing it.[69]

Marx's Indian followers have a confused but predominantly negative attitude to the question of India's legitimacy as a united republic. They are willing to accept the unified Indian state as long as it is useful to their own ends (as in 1959-62, after their election victory in Kerala gave them hope of taking over India, a hope crushed by the embarrassing Chinese invasion of 1962), but they are just as ready to discard it, because they do not believe in it and have no loyalty towards it. Around the time of independence, they actively campaigned for the Balkanization of India, hoping to gobble up one fragment after another. They never tire of denouncing anything that bolsters India's unity as a "myth". For them, India is an artificial unit, a prisonhouse of nations, bound to fall apart.[70]

In contrast with other colonized countries, Marxists in India played no important role in the freedom movement, except negatively. According to a Western Marxist observer: "Uncompromising opposition to Gandhi and his cherished Hindu convictions meant that communists were cut off in a considerable measure from the mainstream of the patriotic struggle".[71] Ever since, they have supported every antinational cause: the crushing of the (1942), Partition (1947), the Razakar terror campaign to prevent the merger of Hyderabad with India (1948), the Chinese claims to Indian territory (up to 1962: "China's chairman is also India's chairman"). As late as 1997, Communist leader Sitaram Yechury refused to admit that China had been the aggressor in 1962.[72] In the 1990s, they have threatened

[68]Tom Bottomore: *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Blackwell, Oxford 1988, entry "Hinduism".

[69]The ICHR controversy is discussed in Arun Shourie: *Eminent Historians, Their Technology, Their Line, Their Fraud*, ASA, Delhi 1998.

[70]This assessment-cum-prediction is made quite cheerfully by Romila Thapar in her 1993 interview in the French daily *Le Monde*.

[71]Tom Bottomore: *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, p. 205.

[72]"China vs. India: who is Yechury batting for?", *Indian Express*, 28.2.1997.

secession of the states they control in the event of a Hindu-nationalist election victory.[73] It is a different matter that by the time this victory took place, in 1998, the Communist movement had become too weak and grey to hazard such action.

To complete the picture, it should be realized that as born upper-caste Hindus alienated by westernization, Indian Marxists are animated by a seething hatred of their ancestral culture. Unlike the British who felt some patronizing sympathy for the heathens whom God had entrusted to their civilizing care, anglicized Hindus feel a need to exorcize the remainders of Hindu heritage from themselves and their surroundings.

1.2.7 Marxism against India

To understand the compulsion on Indian Marxists to hold out against changes in the dominant AIT paradigm as long as possible, we should know a few things about their unique position as compared to that of Marxists elsewhere. Their animosity against the native culture of India and against a theory which would strengthen their own country's prestige is somewhat surprising, for in most Third World countries, Marxists have also been ardent nationalists in the struggle for cultural as well as political and economic decolonization. In Communist countries, national history was rewritten not only to vilify the reactionary forces (e.g. Confucius) but also to highlight and glorify the nation's contribution to material culture and scientific progress. This is or was true of China, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and of their supporters abroad. Thus, Cambridge scientist historian Joseph Needham's loyalty was to Mao's version of Stalinism as a system, but he got enamoured of China itself and wrote a very Sinocentric *History of Science and Civilization in China*, highlighting the unexpectedly large contribution which China has made to human progress.

Along the same lines, we must note in India the lone Marxist historian Bhagwan Singh, who has contributed to the critique of the AIT, focusing specifically on the material culture and the economic data available in *Ved*ic literature and the archaeological record of the Harappan cities, to show that the two match.[74] Also, Western Marxists of an earlier generation have protested against the imperialist projection of colonial racism onto the colonized native society, as in the AIT-related racial theory of caste: "The early Indo-Aryans could no more have thought in modern terms of race prejudice than they could have invented the airplane."[75] Finally, Soviet historians have extolled ancient Hindu contributions to science

[73] According to Ashok Mitra, a leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in West Bengal, in an interview in the Rotterdam daily *NRC Handelsblad*, 20-3-1993, "India was never the solution".

[74] Bhagwan Singh: *The Vedic Harappans*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi 1995.

[75] Quoted from Marxist theorist Oliver Cromwell Cox: *Caste, Class and Race* (1948), p. 91, in Ivan Hannaford: *Race, the History of an Idea in the West*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1996, p. 383. Hannaford summarizes: "The relationship between Brahmans (white), Kshatriyas (red), Vaishyas (yellow) and *Shudra*s (black) was not a color ["*varṇa*"] relationship in the 'racial' sense but a metaphor identified with *dharma* - 'a way of life virtue complex (p. 95) - that was acquired by "the mode of livelihood" or "the inherent qualities of nature". His fundamental argument was that the case for color as a dominant factor in the development of caste was not supported by the evidence of historical literature, and that it

and political culture which were ignored by their political allies in India.[76]

Most Indian Marxists, by contrast, along with their supporters in Western Indology departments (when it comes to controversial issues, most Western India-watchers are incredibly gullible parrots of whatever their privileged Indian contacts tell them), go out of their way to belittle India and to vilify as "chauvinistic" or worse any attempt to revalue India's contribution. The mainstream of contemporary Indian Marxism is true to Karl Marx's own contempt for and worst-possible interpretation of all things Indian. Marx thought that Hinduism "was the ideology of an oppressive and outworn society"; he "shared the distaste of most Europeans for its more lurid features. (...) he was as sceptical as his Hindu followers were to be of any notion of a Hindu 'golden age' of the past."[77]

Marx acknowledged the colonialists' historical mission of eliminating the "Asiatic mode of production", and claimed that colonial rule could only be compared (to its obvious advantage) to the memory of Turkish or the threat of Czarist rule, but not to native rule, for which India was historically unfit because it had never been a nation. In an 1853 letter, Marx wrote that "Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society."[78]

The idea of a continuous and glorious civilization in North India dating back more than 5,000 years does not fit in well with this vision. That of the barbaric Āryans imposing foreign rule on the hapless natives is much more useful, esp. for characterizing Indian society as "oppressive". This way, lingering colonial prejudices of Western scholars and the class interests of India's anglicized elite and anti-Hindu intelligentsia reinforce each other to create the strange spectacle of Indians and indologists virulently opposing any rethinking of India's past which might increase the weight of India's own contribution to her own history.

For instance, Romila Thapar questions the term "Indus-Saraswatī civilization", which "evokes the *Ṛg-Veda*" (by bringing the *Ved*ic river Saraswatī, where the biggest concentration of Harappan cities has been found, into the picture), for its "ideological and political dimensions", and she imputes to its proponents the following motive: "The equating of the Harappan and *Ved*ic culture is not essentially an attempt at correlating archaeological and literary sources (...) There are other agendas which are being addressed in the attempt."[79] It is bad form and bad scholarship to bypass someone's arguments to attack

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was foreign scholars who had made it so."

[76]K. Antonova, G. Bongard-Levin, G. Kotovsky: *A History of India*, 2 vols., Progress Publ., Moscow 1979 (1973), discussed in Arun Shourie: *Eminent Historians, Their Technology, Their Line, Their Fraud*, p. 189ff.

[77]Tom Bottomore: *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, p. 203, paraphrasing K. Marx: *The First Indian War of Independence*, Moscow 1959 (a compilation of Marx' columns on the 1857 Mutiny in the New York Daily Tribune), p. 156.

[78]Quoted with approval by S. K. Biswas: *Autochthon of India and the Aryan Invasions*, Genuine Publ., Delhi 1995, p. 10.

[79]Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 16.

his motives, and even worse to replace his stated motives with imputed motives, but this is one phenomenon which outside observers of the debate will have to get used to: Indian Marxism has given wide currency to the approach of "*I don't care what arguments you come up with, I'm going to tell you what your true motives are, you reactionary pig*".

But then, even if reprehensible, this imputation of motives may once in a while hit upon the truth. I believe Prof. Thapar is right when she guesses this reasoning in the minds of Indian AIT critics: "If it can be argued that the Harappan culture is in fact *Ved*ic or that the *Ṛg-Veda* is earlier even than the Harappan, then the *Veda*s continue to be foundational to the subcontinental civilisation of South Asia and also attract the encomium of representing an advanced civilization, superior even to the pastoral-agrarian culture actually described in *Ved*ic texts."[80] However, I think that in saying this, Prof. Thapar has also revealed what exactly goes on in the minds of Indian Marxist critics of AIT criticism. Indeed, *Ved* ic tradition does gain in stature by being identified with the vast and advanced Harappan civilization: that is why Indian nationalists like it, and just as precisely, it is why Indian Marxists abhor it.

1.2.8 The establishment vs. the outsiders

Since the Marxists have occupied the seats of academic and media power for decades, it is no surprise that their attacks on others often take the form of a haughty dismissal. David Frawley's contributions are laughed off with reference to his lack of western academic training (he studied the *Veda*s in a traditional Indian setting, becoming an acknowledged *vedacarya*). The fact that he published about *Āyurveda* and *Ved*ic astrology are sufficient to denounce him as a "quack". With reference to Subhash Kak and N. S. Rajaram, indeed complete outsiders to the Indian history establishment, Romila Thapar dismisses the contribution of these "American-trained professional scientists researching on ancient India" as essentially "nineteenth-century tracts [though] peppered with references to using the computer so as to suggest scientific objectivity", typical for amateurs who do history "as a hobby".[81]

Should people be allowed to speak out on subjects not mentioned on their diplomas? Romila Thapar seems to think so when it comes to her own case, e.g. as a non-linguist she invokes the authority of the linguistic evidence several times: "Such an early date for the Rigveda is untenable on the available linguistic evidence nor is there support for the argument of a westward flow of people from northern India, neither from linguistic nor

[80] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 16. It is one of Bhagwan Singh's main theses (in *The Vedic Harappans*) that the image of the *Ved*ic people as rustic pastoralists is wrong, e.g. it is in conflict with many indications of long-distance and overseas trade. To the extent that the *Ṛg-Veda* describes a more primitive cultural setting than what the ruins of Harappa suggest, this is explained by identifying the *Ṛg-Ved*ic culture with an earlier stage of Harappan culture, before its most impressive urbanization, e.g. by K. D. Sethna: *KarpAsa in Prehistoric India: a Chronological and Cultural Clue*, Impex India, Delhi 1984.

[81] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 16-17.

from archaeological sources"[82] And: "These reconstructions disregard the linguistic data, probably because it would puncture their argument. It is conveniently stated that the linguistic models arise out of political and cultural factors and presumably therefore may be ignored."[83]

The latter sentence is an incorrect rendering of N. S. Rajaram's rejection of the linguistic evidence. Though he does make much of the political context behind the linguistic theory of an East-European Urheimat, his point is, rather, that the reconstruction of a proto-language can never reach beyond the stage of mere hypothesis, for it cannot pass the decisive scientific test of empirical verifications.[84] This critique is pertinent, though by no means as devastating for the scientific value of historical linguistics as Prof. Rajaram assumes; it is at any rate more than a "convenient" excuse.

I believe AIT critics are wrong to disregard the linguistic evidence, but I also believe that for those who rightly choose to take it into account, evaluating the linguistic evidence requires specific competence. The US-based scientists' exaggerated skepticism vis-à-vis linguistics has at least made them abstain from dabbling in a subject they don't sufficiently understand. By contrast, Romila Thapar discusses not only the linguistic but also the astronomical evidence, if only to dismiss it as unreliable.[85] Now, here is a subject on which I would rather trust a NASA scientist like Prof. Rajaram than a bookworm from JNU's History department. Likewise, the evidence of *Ved*ic mathematics (Baudhāyana's *Śulba Sūtra* as logical ancestor of Babylonian and Greek mathematics) is a subject which I would rather leave in the care of professional mathematicians like Rajaram and Subhash Kak. If anything looks "19th-century" in this debate, it is the conspicuous negligence by Prof. Thapar and other invasionists of the input from the exact sciences, an input which has gone far in strengthening the anti-AIT case.

True, there is often something naive about exact scientists when they enter the field of the Humanities. But then, people from the Sciences have a logic and a lucidity and a healthy aversion to compromise with prevalent opinion (natural laws not being bendable to opinion), so that, once they have learned the ways of the Humanities, they often do much better than the established authorities. This is particularly true in India, where bright students are invariably guided towards the scientific departments, so that the Humanities typically attract the second-rate students, quite a few of whom go on to become professors. Anyone can master the art of providing erudite footnotes, but the *Ved*ic and Harappan evidence, particularly the evidence reachable through the "hard" sciences (astronomy, geology), is a much more serious nut to crack.

Another Marxist historian, Parvathi Menon, has ridiculed Dr. Natwar Jha, who has

[82] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 15.

[83] *ibid.* p. 17

[84] N. S. Rajaram: *Politics of History*, pp. 174-196.

[85] "The use of astronomy in dating an entire text is regarded as unreliable since the references to planetary positions could have been incorporated from an earlier tradition which need not have been *Ved*ic", according to Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 12.

elaborated a Sanskrit-based decipherment of the Indus script, as "just a schoolmaster".[86] Comments N. S. Rajaram: "This is not true, but it doesn't matter. The great mathematician Ramanujan was a clerk in the Madras port, while Einstein himself was serving as a clerk in the Swiss patent office when he discovered Relativity. (...) the idea of objectivity is beyond such minds; status means everything."[87]

Mercifully, Romila Thapar and her friends haven't found occasion to comment on Shrikant Talageri yet. His bright and innovative contributions, quite literally written after working hours "as a hobby", would not suggest to the readers that he actually makes a living as a bank clerk. There was a time when Marxists denounced academic ivory towers and applauded the contributions of working people, but in India they have been too privileged to be even polite towards people who make an honest living.

1.2.9 Indian Marxists abroad

In their campaign against India and Hinduism, Indian Marxists get plenty of patronage from Western universities. When Non-Resident Indians raise money to fund a chair of Indian Studies in a Western university, what they get for their money is in most cases the appointment of an Indian Marxist academic who comes to confirm the Western audiences in their most negative stereotypes about India, e.g. by reducing every single aspect of Hindu civilization to "caste oppression" (it is Axioma 1 of contemporary Indian Studies that Hinduism is caste, wholly caste and nothing but caste). Thus, the Hinduja Foundation has set up an Indic Studies programme in Columbia University, but its staff includes determinedly anti-Hindu characters who even vilify their own sponsors at conferences elsewhere.

One occasion where I saw US-based Indian Marxists in action was at the 1996 Annual South Asia Conference in Madison, Wisconsin, in a panel purportedly dealing with the AIT debate. I knew that excellent and innovative papers by N. S. Rajaram and Shrikant Talageri had been rejected by the organizers, so I felt entitled to expect presentations of top-notch scholarship dwarfing even that of Rajaram and Talageri. Instead, what the audience got, was a canvassing session for the "Forum of Indian Leftists" without any scholarly papers. The speakers disdained to even mention any of the argumentative contents of the AIT debate, except "David Frawley's paradox" (the AIT's puzzling implication pointed out by Frawley, viz. that the Harappan civilization had numerous cities but no literature, while *Ved*ic civilization had a vast literature but no cities)[88], which they simply laughed

[86] Parvathi Menon in the Communist fortnightly *Frontline*, 21-2-1997; see also JNU professor Shereen Ratnagar's hostile review of N. S. Rajaram's work in *Frontline*, 9-1-1996. The principle of the decipherment is presented in N. Jha: *Vedic Glossary on Indus Seals*, Gaṅgā Kaveri Publ., Varanasi 1996.

[87] N. S. Rajaram: *From Harappa to Ayodhya*, p. 12.

[88] D. Frawley (with N. S. Rajaram): *Vedic 'Aryans' and the Origin of Civilization*, WH Press, Québec 1995, p. 23. Note that the authors, or their publisher, took care to put "Aryans" in quotation marks; and that the publisher changed his name from "World Heritage Press" to "WH Press" to obscure the word "heritage" (German *Erbe*, as in *Ahnenerbe*, "Ancestral Heritage", the name of the SS research department): so intense is the fear that the vaguest allusion to terms employed by the Nazis would be deemed indicative

off without discussion *ad rem*.

But Frawley's paradox is entirely pertinent: what are the chances that a literate culture leaves the biggest conglomerate of archaeological sites behind, but only a handful of short inscriptions as the complete corpus of its literature; while the illiterate conquerors produce a vast and sophisticated literature within a few centuries, but leave no sizable architecture behind? What are the chances that the largest civilization of the world loses its language to a conquering band of nomadic tribesmen? The AIT has the weight of probability against it.

The one interesting piece of information in the whole session was presented by Vijay Prashad: about the impact of the Āryan race theory on the position of (Asian) Indians in the USA in the past century. It turns out that for much of the time, they were counted as "white" thanks to their IE connection, and that they strongly held on to this profitable classification rather than to show solidarity with other non-white minorities. But in the 1970s, when the policy of positive discrimination for ethnic minorities started to have a serious impact, Indians were not slow to parade their skin colour as entitling them to minority privileges. If true, this is yet another interesting instance of the political use of the AIT. However, Prashad revealed his destructive intentions when he called *Dalit Voice* "a wonderful paper" and praised its disruptive positions, esp. its division of Indians in aboriginals and invaders.

Biju Matthew insisted on the Stalinist position that in the social sciences, no theory ever comes without a political agenda. So, he reduced the whole AIT debate to a question of cultural policy of the Indian bourgeoisie, which was badly trying to be European. This was indeed part of the motive for the 19th-century *acceptance* of the AIT by the likes of Keshab Chandra Sen, but not of the present-day *rejection* of the AIT. But Matthew had not cared to notice the diametrical opposition between the former, colonial, and the latter, anti-colonial positions, perhaps because he counted on a knee-jerk reaction of hostility to anyone who merely utters the word

He was all the more serious about deciding the burning question whether Non-Resident Indians should call themselves "Indian" or "South-Asian"; he himself opted for the latter "because it has the advantage of being antinational". He wanted South-Asians in North America to shake off their religious and national identities and develop an "identity project" on the model of the African-Americans, which would only leave race as the distinctive trait of South-Asians in the US, a self-identification which approximates racism in its original meaning. I am in no position to berate African-Americans for defining their own identity in racial terms, for the reduction of their complex ethno-religio-linguistic identities (Yoruba, Ashanti etc.) to their skin colour was forced on them by Arab (7th-20th century) and later also by European slave-traders (15th-19th century); but to deliberately drop existing non-racial identities for a racial one, that is another matter.

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of Nazi intentions. Also see Georg Feuerstein, Subhash Kak & David Frawley: *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization*, Theosophical Publ., Wheaton IL 1995.

1.3 POLITICIZATION AS AN OBSTACLE TO RESEARCH

1.3.1 Taboo on Indo-European studies

The association of racist doctrines with the term "Āryan", introduced in Western languages as a synonym of "Indo-European", had as one of its side-effects that after the collapse of Nazi Germany, the entire field of IE studies came under a shadow. Specialists of IE culture were ipso facto suspected of Nazi sympathies. Sometimes this was not altogether baseless, e.g. the Dutch scholar Jan de Vries, whose studies on Germanic and Celtic culture are still standard works, was chairman of the *Kulturkammer*, the collaborationist institution which controlled the purse strings for all cultural activities under the German occupation of the Netherlands. Under his supervision, Nazi themes were cunningly interwoven with legitimate Dutch or Germanic folklore. Though arguably not a full-blooded Nazi by conviction, he could hardly be considered innocent.

In other cases, this suspicion is quite misplaced, e.g. in the case of Georges Dumézil, actually a critic of Nazism, cautious in public but quite outspoken in his minor writings and private communications.[89] It is true that Dumézil sympathized with Italian Fascism, but Fascism *stricto sensu* contrasted with Nazism in very important respects, esp. in not being racist (the Communist-imposed usage of "Fascism" as a generic term or as a synonym of National-Socialism, resulting from Stalin's desire to avoid staining the term "socialism" with Hitlerian associations, obscures the contrast between the two systems). It has been shown that Dumézil's sympathy for Fascism and contempt for Nazism may have influenced his views of ancient Germanic religion, which he contrasted unfavourably with ancient Roman religion.[90] In Dumézil's studies ca. 1940, Germanic religion is criticized as a defective evolute of IE religion, having lost the spiritual and overemphasized the martial function: this was at least partly a projection onto the past of the militarization of Germany in Dumézil's own day.

As late as 1982, a survey of Swedish national history had its chapters on the settlement of the Indo-Europeans in Scandinavia cut out. Not rewritten but cut out, for the very mention of the Indo-Europeans (not even "Āryans") was considered irredeemably tainted.[91] The hysterical nature of this act of censorship comes out more clearly when you realize that the settlement of IE immigrants coming to Scandinavia from the southeast goes *against* the Nazi predilection for a North-European Urheimat of the "Āryans". Even now, normalcy

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[89] A list and rebuttal of the allegations against Dumézil is given in Didier Eribon: *Faut-it brûler Dumézil?* (*"Should Dumézil be burned at the stake?"*), Flammarion, Paris 1992. Of course, malafide authors keep on repeating the refuted allegations.

[90] Bruce Lincoln: "Rewriting the German war god: Georges Dumézil, politics and scholarship in the late 1930s", *History of Religions*, Feb. 1998.

[91] The work affected is R. & G. Haland: *Bra Böckers Världhistoria*, vol. 1, Höganäs 1982, as reported in Christopher Prescott & Eva Walderhaug: "The Last Frontier? Processes of Indo-Europeanization in Northern Europe: the Norwegian Case", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, autumn/winter 1995, p-257-278.

in this department of historical research has not been entirely restored yet.

This taboo on IE studies emanates from lazy or superstitious minds: rather than identifying exactly what was wrong with Nazism, they simply label everything which was ever associated with the Nazi regime, albeit accidentally or even illegitimately (as with the swastika, borrowed without permission, through the Theosophy-led "occultist" revival, from Hindu-Jain-Buddhist tradition)[92], as being somehow the root cause of the Holocaust. All kinds of things justly or unjustly associated with the Nazi regime are still under a cloud even though they have in any case nothing to do with the crimes of that regime.

Thus, in 1997, the German Minister of Postal Services, Wolfgang Bötsch (belonging to the right-wing Christlich-Soziale Union), stopped the printing of poststamps commemorating the 200th anniversary of the liberal German-Jewish poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) because they showed the years of his birth and death with the runic signs *Man* (a glyph resembling a tree with upward branches, suggesting life) c.q. *Yr* ("yew", a tree with branches hanging down, signifying death), still a common usage in North-European graveyards. Someone had protested that runes are tainted by their association with the Nazi elite corps, the SS, whose sigil carried the letters SS in runic script. In reality, the rune script is thousands of years old and has nothing to do with the Nazi ideology, even less than the Roman script in which the orders for exterminating the Jews were written.

In some cases, this fear of anything that was in any way related to Nazi Germany is simply silly, e.g. the tirades in the leading Belgian daily *La Libre Belgique* in the post-war years against plans for a national motorway network, citing the grim objection that the German motorways had been built by Hitler. It is a modern form of superstition, as if all these items are somehow magically tainted with the Nazi evil. In other cases, the tendency to cast the net of Nazi guilt as widely as possible is a deliberate strategy born from self-interested calculation. Thus, many members of the post-war generation enjoyed putting the entire generation of their parents in the dock, telling them that their values (order, discipline, morality), which Hitler had also extolled, had "led to" Auschwitz. Communists still try to capitalize on their victory against Nazism in their struggle against other opponents, arguing e.g. that liberal democracy is deeply flawed and that this is proven by Hitler's rise to power through democratic elections: so, down with democracy, for it has "led to" Hitler's regime.

In the present case, Christians and secularists who try to make the (largely mythical) association of ancient IE Pagan culture with Nazism stick to the old enemy: Pagan religion, including the neo-Paganism now emerging in many European countries.[93] For all we know

[92] In its final report (1997), the Belgian Parliamentary Enquiry Committee on Cults counted the Mahikari movement of Japanese Shinto origin among the dangerous cults and accused it of "extreme Right" connections, citing no other evidence than that a swastika had been seen on its premises. Buddhist temples in the West have been targets of serious vandalism because of the swastikas on their walls. The swastika is used to prove the essentially evil character of Hinduism in Evangelical propaganda, e.g. the 1980s' movie *Gods of the New Age* by Jeremiah Films, discussed with indignation by a more fair-minded missionary, Richard Young, in *Areopagus* (Hong Kong), Christmas 1990.

[93] A Christian attempt to associate Paganism with Nazism is Robert A. Pois: *National Socialism and*

about ancient IE culture, or certainly about the ancient Celtic, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic ancestors of the modern Germans, they were very freedom-loving, they had a decentralized polity and a pluralistic religion, and they had of course no notion of anti-Semitism. They would never have felt at home in Hitler's regimented and racially obsessed Nazi state.

1.3.2 Paradigm inertia

From the usefulness of the AIT for political ends, it does not follow that the AIT was coined simply as a political weapon. Both in Europe and in India, many scholars have believed and still believe that the AIT is simply the most convincing hypothesis to account for a number of actual data in linguistics and other disciplines. The tendency in some Indian circles to denounce linguistics as a "pseudo-science" for having generated the AIT, or to allege that the AIT was "concocted" by political schemers, must be rejected. On the whole, the scholars concerned genuinely believed in their own hypotheses, and were sincerely trying to make sense of newly-discovered facts such as the linguistic kinship between the languages of Europe and northern India.

But if the Western scholars are not guided by political motives, their Hindu critic might ask, why are they so stubborn in refusing to acknowledge facts which may disturb the AIT? Why, for example, have they failed, all through the past decade, to acknowledge the relevance of the twin fact that archaeology locates the Harappan civilization mostly in the Saraswatī river basin, and that *Ved*ic literature places *Ved*ic civilization in the same Saraswatī basin, in both cases before the river dried up in ca. 2000 BC?

If historians and linguists sometimes display great ingenuity in explaining away (or just ignoring) facts inconvenient to their pet theory, this should be seen as merely a case of the universal tendency to stick to established beliefs until the evidence to the contrary becomes really overwhelming. Scientists - in any field - abhor the disorder created by information which is incompatible with the established theory, and therefore rightfully continue to assume that a second look will smoothen this initial incompatibility and "domesticate" the new information. They have a very functional kind of immunity to facts disturbing the paradigm which underlies their research.

Even a first-rate and patriotic Indian historian like R. C. Majumdar had the same capacity to keep on ignoring facts disobeying the theory to which his mind had become accustomed, viz. the AIT. After describing how many cultural elements of the "pre-Āryan" Indus civilization have survived till today, Majumdar displays that typical academic skill of not taking even registered facts into account once they come in conflict with the paradigm: "How such a great culture and civilization could *vanish without leaving any trace* or even memory behind it, is a problem that cannot be solved at the present state of our knowl-

the Religion of Nature, Croom Helm, Beckenham GB 1986. A secularist attempt to impute a proto-Nazi mind-set to Paganism is found in numerous passages in Bernard-Henry Lévy's books *Le Testament de Dieu*, Grasset, Paris 1979, and L'Idéologie Française, *ibid.* 1981.

edge." [94] Such a huge anomaly should call the theory itself into question, esp. when an alternative is ready at hand, and is even suggested by facts mentioned by Majumdar himself, viz. that there is a straight continuity between the Indus civilization and the later stages of "Āryan" culture.

For another example, the allusions to armed conflict in the *Ṛg-Veda* have always been taken to refer to the confrontation between the Āryan invaders and the defenders of the indigenous culture. Madhav M. Deshpande remarks about these references: "It is extremely important to recognize that all of these references to *dasyu-hattya* [= killing of the Dasyu enemies] are found in those parts of the *Ṛg-Veda* which are traditionally regarded to be late parts of the text." [95] This should imply that the invaders were at first on good terms with the natives (like the *Mayflower* pioneers with the Native Americans) but became hostile later; or that the *Ved*ic people were stable inhabitants of the region which forms the permanent background of the *Ved*ic hymns, and were confronted with these *Dasyu*s at a later stage, viz. when the *Dasyu*s invaded the *Ved*ic-Āryan territory; or that this hostility had nothing to do with a confrontation between invaders and natives.

But Deshpande doesn't even consider any of these possibilities: "This would most probably mean that even by the time of the late parts of the *Ṛg-Veda*, the attitudes of the *Ved*ic Āryans had not significantly changed, and that they still regarded the *dasyu*s as those who deserve to be killed by *Indra*." [96] After saying in so many words that the earlier layers of the *Ṛg-Veda* do not contain this hostility, he claims that the late parts "still" have it, and that the Āryans' attitude "had not significantly changed", when it had actually changed from neutral to hostile, as per his own summary of the *Ved*ic data. When facts challenging the AIT stare him in the face, the scholar tends to prefer the familiar theory to the unwilling facts, and this phenomenon can exist quite separately from any possible political bias.

1.3.3 Political excuse for non-argumentation: the West

One consequence of the political connotations of the rivalling theories is that people feel justified in dismissing the theory they don't like as "politically motivated" and *therefore* obviously wrong and not worth refuting. This phenomenon is in evidence in both wings of the political pro-AIT coalition, a certain European Right and a certain Indian Left (plus its friends in the West). Thus, the survey of IE studies in the French periodical *Nouvelle Ecole* devotes exactly one footnote to the entire argumentation for an Indian Urheimat, which it dismisses as "in self-evident contradiction with all the data of linguistics and comparative mythology" and as the symptom of "an exacerbated Indian nationalism". [97] Consequently,

[94] R. C. Majumdar: *Ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1991 (1952), p. 19; emphasis added.

[95] M. M. Deshpande: "Genesis of *Ṛg-Ved*ic Retroflexion", in M. M. Deshpande & P. E. Hook: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, Ann Arbor 1979, p. 300.

[96] M. M. Deshpande: "Genesis of *Ṛg-Ved*ic Retroflexion", in M. M. Deshpande & P. E. Hook: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, p. 300.

[97] Alain de Benoist in *Nouvelle Ecole* 49, Paris 1997, p. 44.

it does not care to mention the Indian Urheimat theory in its discussion of "the five existing (Urheimat) hypotheses".[98] This is, of course, a case of the "genetic fallacy": to assume that a position must be wrong because of the motive in which it allegedly originates. Quite apart front the fact that this motive is merely imputed, and often falsely so, no good or evil motive can make a proposition right or wrong; it is perfectly possible to speak the truth for the wrong reasons.

Bernard Sergent, in an otherwise brilliant book, can equally dispose of the anti-invasionist argument in a single footnote, in which he accuses American archaeologist Jim Shaffer of "manipulations", which consist in "simply ignoring the linguistic data".[99] He misrepresents scientist N. S. Rajaram's argument against the linguistic evidence for the Āryan invasion as follows: "Linguistics is not a science because it doesn't reach the same conclusions as I do." (In reality, Rajaram's critique concerns the tendency common among linguists to treat hypothetical reconstructions as historical facts, and the impossibility for historical linguistics to satisfy two tests of real science, viz. reproducing its findings and defining test criteria which can show up its claims as false.)[100] Sergent also dismisses conferences such as the 1996 conference of the World Association for *Ved*ic Studies in Atlanta on the Indus-Saraswatī civilization as propaganda exercises betraying a crusading rather than a dispassionate scholarly spirit. This is rather poor as refutation, but then his whole point is precisely that theories construed as emanating from a political agenda are simply not worth discussing or refuting.

There are cases where the impression of political usefulness of a theory has stimulated research without really obstructing the researchers' objectivity and sincerity. Thus, in the 19th century, French scholars eagerly explored the possibility that the Italic and Celtic branches of the IE language family had, after separating from PIE, continued for long as a single language group: such a scenario would have helped in strengthening the French nation's historical identity, otherwise split between a biological Celtic ancestry and linguistic Latin roots. This research ultimately led to the non-desired conclusion that Celtic and Italic were, after all, not much closer to each other than either is to Germanic or Greek. Ironically, recent research has revived and given new support to the idea that Italic and Celtic did share a common itinerary for some centuries after the break-up of IE unity, and this is not any less true just because it has been a pet theory of French chauvinists.

Another example of the refused to discuss "politically motivated" research is the treatment given to Shrikant Talageri in a prestigious book specifically setting itself the task of countering the rising tide of doubts voiced by archaeologists and philologists about the AIT. One may or may not agree with Talageri's anti-AIT position, but he has undoubtedly built up a painstaking argumentation with ample reference to state-of-the-art scholarship, and

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[98] *ibid.* p. 50

[99] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, Payot, Paris 1997, p. 477. Shaffer is also derided for consulting only English-language publications.

[100] See e.g. N. S. Rajaram: *Aryan Invasion of India, the Mob and the Truth*, Voice of India, Delhi 1993, p. 42, and Politics of History, ibid. 1995, p. 163ff.

he deserves better than this comment by George Erdosy, who locates him in the "lunatic fringe" and judges: "Unfortunately, political motivation (usually associated with Hindu revivalism) renders this opposition devoid of scholarly value".[101] In the same volume, Michael Witzel dismisses his work as "modern Hindu exegetical or apologetic religious writing".[102]

So far, so good; Erdosy and Witzel are entitled to their opinions, even to calling a fellow scholar a "lunatic" (though I doubt that they could get their articles past the editor of an academic journal if they applied this term to a Western scholar).[103] But the point is: they don't show even the least acquaintance with the actual arguments offered by Talageri. Both Erdosy and Witzel refer to: "S. K. Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism*, Aditya Prakashan 1993". That is how the book's data were given in a (laudatory) review by Girilal Jain in the *Times of India* of 17 June 1993. Unfortunately, the author's real name is , and the book's publisher is not Aditya Prakashan (though there is another edition of the same book under a different title by Aditya Prakashan, hence the reviewer's confusion), but Voice of India.[104] This indicates that the book which Erdosy and Witzel dismiss in such strong terms has never even been on their desk.

1.3.4 Political excuse for non-argumentation: India

In India too, proponents of the AIT use the alleged political connotations of the rival theory as a handy pretext for avoiding discussion of the actual evidence. Thus, historian Romila Thapar devotes a 27-page lead article in a social science periodical (which admits in an editorial note that the article's publication is a political move to counter "the Hindutva forces", and falsely narrows the non-AIT school down to "the RSS") to "The Theory of Āryan Race and India" practically without mentioning the evidence presented by the non-AIT school.[105] She invokes "the linguistic evidence" twice as proof of a late chronology for

[101] G. Erdosy, ed.: *Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin 1995, p.x. This comment also extends to Paramesh Choudhury: *The Āryans: a Modern Mob*, Eastern Publ., Delhi 1993.

[102] M. Witzel in G. Erdosy: *Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 116-117. Referring to a likeminded piece by A. K. Biswas (whom he mistakenly associates with Talageri), he ridicules "the ulterior political motive of this 'scientific' piece"; op.cit., p. 111.

[103] In spite of all the "multiculturalism" and "globalization" buzz-words, numerous Westerners still treat Indians as a lesser breed which is not to be taken seriously. Prof. Ulrich Libbrecht, the Flemish pioneer of Comparative Philosophy, told me how at an international conference in Honolulu on that subject, multicultural par excellence, the average American participant treated the lectures by Indians as coffee breaks. I too have noticed many times that proposals for talks or publications by Indians are dismissed without a proper hearing on the assumption that Indians are cranks unless they have an introduction from a Western institution.

[104] Shrikant Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi 1993, with a foreword by Prof. S. R. Rao and minus the three more political introductory chapters of the Voice of India edition: *Āryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism*, with foreword by Sita Ram Goel.

[105] R. Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics", *Social Scientist*, Delhi, January-March 1996, p. 3-29. RSS: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, "National Volunteer Association", a Hindu Nationalist organization founded in 1925, now several million strong, and closely linked with the

the *Veda*s (1500 BC), without telling us how the linguistic data prove her point. Off-hand, she brings in "the Indo-Iranian links" as proof of the same "since the earliest suggested date now for Zoroaster is circa 1200 BC", ignoring the fact that the dating of Zoroaster's *Avesta* is itself based on the late chronology of the *Veda*s (the Avestan language being a slightly younger offshoot of Indo-Iranian than *Ved*ic Sanskrit). This cavalier way of dealing with evidence apparently stems from the feeling that the anti-AIT case need not be taken seriously.

Most importantly, Romila Thapar's entire article could easily have been written several decades ago, for she totally disregards all the evidence from archaeology and archaeo-astronomy presented by her opponents in recent years. She does mention the existence of a non-AIT school, but explains it away as partly an RSS conspiracy, partly a symptom of a psychological identity crisis in Non-Resident Indians, meaning US-based scientists N. S. Rajaram and Subhash Kak and historian Sushil Mittal of the *International Institute for Indian Studies* in Québec.

The same disregard for recent evidence is noticeable in R. S. Sharma's book *Looking for the Aryans*, which went to the press in November 1994 but fails to mention the pre-1994 argumentations against the AIT by K. D. Sethna, S. P. Gupta (the only RSS man in the non-AIT school), David Frawley, Shrikant Talageri and others, even in the bibliography. Thus, Sharma repeats the old identification of Painted Grey Ware with the invading Āryans, in stark disregard of the fact that the scholars whom he is countering (as well as some who never opposed the AIT) have demonstrated that PGW was but one "Āryan" art form among others, and that it is not traceable to Central Asia as a marker of invading Āryans.[106]

The derivation of a judgment on the Urheimat question from the alleged motives of the proponents of the contending theories is all-pervading and vitiates the whole debate. Yet, if a theory can be considered wrong simply because it is being used for political ends, it is clear that the AIT itself must be the wrongest theory in the world: one looks in vain for a historical hypothesis which has been more tainted with various political uses including the most lethal ones.

1.4 A CASE STUDY IN AIT POLEMIC

1.4.1 A primer in AIT polemic

For a case study in anti-AIT polemic, I have chosen the article "An obscurantist argument" by the Dutch-Canadian scholar Robert J. Zydenbos.[107] His bona fides are unquestionable,

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Bharatiya Janata Party which came to power in March 1998.

[106] R. S. Sharma: *Looking for the Aryans*, p. 12.

[107] *Indian Express*, 12-12-1993, in reply to a piece on a lecture by Prof. N. S. Rajaram, Indian Express, 14-11-1993, of which an expanded version constitutes the first chapter of Rajaram's book: *Aryan Invasion of India, the Myth and the Truth*, Voice of India, Delhi 1994.

and he represents the majority of AIT-believing scholars in that he merely accepts the predominant opinion without having a political axe to grind, though this makes him susceptible to being influenced by AIT defenders who do have political motives. He is emphatically not a representative of the anti-Brahminism so prevalent among Western India-watchers, being in fact the author of an informed critique of this ideological distortion of much contemporary scholarship.[108] Some of the rhetoric in this article typifies the way in which certain AIT defenders in positions of authority tend to over-awe the public with references to overrated evidence, and to vilify spokesmen of the dissident non-AIT school.

The piece is an attack on N. S. Rajaram, a scientist from Karnataka (in AIT parlance: a Dravidian, not an Āryan) working in the USA, who has contributed decisive insights to the AIT debate.[109] I disagree on some important points with Prof. Rajaram, most of all with his rejection of the linguistic reconstruction of an IE protolanguage; but that is no reason to dismiss his work as "a textbook example of the quasi-religious-cum-political obscurantism that is so popular among alienated Non-Resident Indians", which is moreover "out of touch with what serious scholars both in India and abroad hold at present", as Zydenbos alleges.

"The linguistic evidence for the Indo-European origin of Sanskrit outside India is overwhelming", he claims, in almost verbatim agreement with Prof. Romila Thapar, whom he defends against Rajaram's critique of her article "The Perennial Aryans".[110] Neither in his nor in Prof. Thapar's much lengthier article is even one item of this "overwhelming evidence" mentioned. However, Dr. Zydenbos can claim the merit of being one of the first (to my knowledge, the very first) among the defenders of the AIT to actually respond to the rising tide of anti-AIT argumentation.

1.4.2 Ethnically pure Āryans

Zydenbos starts his crescendo of allegations by stating something Rajaram never disputed: "No scholar seriously believes that there are any 'ethnically pure' Āryans in India today (and perhaps anywhere else, either). And why should anyone care?" Actually, Rajaram himself is among those who reject the notion of "ethnically pure Āryans", not because of the obvious fact that countless inter-ethnic marriages have taken place, but because he rejects the use of 'Āryan' as an ethnic term in the first place. As he and many others have argued time and again, the Sanskrit word *Ārya* was not an ethnic term, it is Western scholars who have turned it into one.

And it is the Western participant in this duel, Dr. Zydenbos, who, even after reading

[108] Robert J. Zydenbos: "Virashaivism, caste, revolution, etc.", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1997, p. 525-535, a review of the very Christian (and anti-Brahminical) look at the Virashaiva sect by Rev. J. P. Schouten: *Revolution of the Mystics: On the Social Aspects of Virashaivism*, Kok/Pharos, Kampen (Netherlands) 1991.

[109] Apart from other works by Rajaram mentioned elsewhere, note also N. S. Rajaram: *From Saraswatī River to Indus Script*, Diganta Sahitya, Mangalore 1998, an elaboration on the Sanskrit-based decipherment of the Indus script by N. Jha: *Vedic Glossary on Indus Seals*, Ganga Kaveri Publ., Varanasi 1996.

[110] Romila Thapar: "The Perennial Aryans", *Seminar* # 400 (1992).

Prof. Rajaram, just continues to use "Āryan" as an ethnic and even as a racial term: "Those who called themselves 'Āryan' 1000 years ago were already very different from the various Āryan tribes that came over 3500 years ago (...) This too is historical fact. One only needs to learn Sanskrit to find this out." I fear that there is something very wrong with Sanskrit courses if accomplished indologists can read *Ārya* in a racial sense unattested in the whole of Sanskrit literature.

The anti-AIT authors may nonetheless be wrong in denying an ethnic meaning to *Ārya* altogether. While *Ārya* was definitely never a racial or linguistic concept, it may have had a precise ethnic usage at least in some circles in one specific period. As Shrikant Talageri has shown, in the *Ṛg-Veda*, the term *Ārya* is exclusively applied to the Puru tribe, including the Bharata clan, the community which generated the *Ṛg-Ved*ic texts. Thus, when something negative is said about "*Ārya*" people, these turn out to be non-Bharata Purus; and when the merits of a non-Puru king or sage are extolled, he may be called any term of praise but never *Ārya*.[111] Likewise, it seems that the Iranian *Avesta* uses *Airya* in referring to a specific community, the cultivators in the Oxus river basin, contrasting it with nomadic barbarians who were similar in race and equally Iranian-speaking (generically known as *Shakas/Scythians*), but who were not part of the sedentary Mazdean *"Airya"* world.[112]

The matter must be studied more closely, after freeing ourselves from the AIT-related misconceptions. For now, I speculate that the term *Ārya* spread over the Hindu world, which included many non-*Ved*ic Indo-Āryan-speaking tribes (Aikshvaku, Yadava, Pramshava, etc.), along with the *Ved*ic tradition which was originally the exclusively local tradition of the Paurava tribe and Bharata clan settled on the banks of the Saraswatī river. And that it originally had an ethnic connotation, something like "the Puru tradition", even when used as the name of a religious tradition and civilizational standard, viz. the *Ved*ic culture, somewhat like the ethno-geographical term *Roman* came to mean "Catholic". At any rate, in classical Sanskrit, *Ārya* means "civilized", specifically "following the norms of *Ved*ic civilization", and this might imply a reference to the ancient situation when *Ved*ic culture typified the metropolis, the Saraswatī region (well-attested as being the centre of both the *Ṛg-Ved*ic world and Harappan civilization), which the provinces tried to emulate. In the *śāstra*s and in literary works, the term *Ārya* typically takes the place which would nowadays be filled by the term *Hindu*, or of "the Hindu ideal", *Hindu* in a normative rather than in a descriptive sense.

It is in this (by that time definitely the usual) sense that the Buddha used the term *Ārya*, as in the *catvāri-ārya-satyāni*, "the four noble truths", and the *ārya-aṣṭāṅgika-mārga*, "the noble eightfold path", meaning that his way (more than the petty magic with which many *Veda*-reciting priests made a living) fulfilled the old ideals of *Ved*ic civilization. It is with

[111] Shrikant Talageri: *The Ṛg-Veda, an Historical Analysis*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi, forthcoming.

[112] It is as yet unclear whether in this consideration we should include the self-description of the Kalash Kafirs, the last semi-*Ved*ic Pagans in the Hindu Kush mountains (unaffected by all the later developments in the Indian plains which now constitute Hinduism), as *Ārya-e-Koh*, "*Ārya*s of the mountains". Rather than authentic testimony, this could be the result of interiorizing theories learned from Western visitors.

a similar intention that the modern *Veda* revivalists of the Ā*rya Sam*ā*j* chose the name of their organization. While conceptions may differ concerning what the real essence of the *Ved*ic worldview was, there has been a wide pan-Indian agreement for at least 3,000 years that *Ārya* means a standard of civilization, regardless of language, race or even ethnicity.

1.4.3 Rajaram vs. Hitler

Next, Zydenbos attacks Rajaram's reading of Romila Thapar's article, esp. her insinuation (uttered much more explicitly elsewhere by other Marxist authors in India)[113] that the anti-AIT case is motivated by some kind of Hitlerian vision of Āryanism: "Romila Thapar does not 'obviously refer to Nazi Germany' when she speaks of the fantasy of an 'Āryan nation', but to the new Indian tendency among obscurantists towards creating something parallel." So, alleging that someone wants to "create something parallel to Nazi Germany" does not imply a reference to Nazi Germany? In that case, we might perhaps focus on the implied allegation that those Indians who question the AIT are entertaining a fantasy of creating an "Āryan nation".

I challenge Prof. Thapar and Dr. Zydenbos to produce any publication of any Indian scholar presently questioning the AIT which contains even a hint of this "fantasy". And I reprimand them both for using the term *Ārya*(*n*) uncritically, i.e. without explicitating that it has two distinct meanings, viz. "Hindu" for Hindus, and "of Nordic race" for the Nazis. If that distinction is made, the alleged connection between Rajaram and Hitler (through the "common" term Ā*ryan*) vanishes, and this seems to go against the AIT defenders' intentions. In the current opinion climate, accusing someone of Nazi connections is the single gravest allegation possible. I don't think that in an academic forum, one can simply get away with such extremely serious allegations; one has to offer evidence, - or apologies.

If even scholars of Zydenbos's rank entertain the confusion between Āryan/Nordic-racist and *Ārya*/Hindu, it is no surprise that this confusion vitiates much journalistic reporting on Hinduism and Hindu nationalism. Thus, the French monthly *Le Choc du Mois* once commented that the "sulphurous" BJP takes inspiration from "Bharat, the first Āryan prince in North India". By all accounts, *Bharata*, patriarch of the *Ved*ic Bharata clan, came later than many other Āryans in North India: *Manu*, *Ikṣvāku*, *Mandhata*, *Yayāti*, Bharata's own ancestor Puru, et al. Anyway, here is the key to Hindu political thought: "The basis of the 'Hindu nation' will therefore be Āryanity, a warlike and conquering Āryanity which owes its imperial territory only to an unceasing struggle on the side of the gods."[114] This mixes a projection of stereotypes concerning Islamic fundamentalism onto its Hindu "counterpart" with the AIT-based Āryan lore.

But seriously: *are* Hindu scholars, if only just a few of them, thinking along the lines of "Āryan" racism? Apart from reading the works of the Indian scholars concerned, I have

[113]E.g. Yoginder Sikand: "Exploding the Aryan myth", *Observer of Business and Politics*, 30-10-1993, discussed below.

[114]Olivier Tramond: "Inde: le réveil identitaire de la droite", *Le Choc du Mois*, Sep. 1992.

also privately talked with most of them, and I feel certain that no such "fantasy" is at the back of the anti-AIT polemic. In fact, what they reject in Western scholarship is precisely the creation of the conceptual framework which has made the racialist misuse of the term "Āryan" possible: "Indian Marxists in particular are singularly touchy about the whole thing and hate to be reminded that their pet dogma of the non-indigenous origin of the *Ved* ic Āryan civilization is an offshoot of the same race theories that gave rise to Nazism." [115]

1.4.4 The importance of being white

Dr. Zydenbos continues: "This includes the endorsement of blatant racism by certain Indian scholarly personalities. Thus, the archaeologist S. R. Rao, who also figures in Rajaram's article, said at a recent seminar in Mysore in response to a student's question about the Āryans that we should not listen to what 'white people' say." I don't know how Hitler would have felt about this slur on white people, but Zydenbos is quite mistaken when he infers that there is any "racism" behind Prof. Rao's remark. Rao obviously did not mean that whiteness makes one unfit for researching the question of the "Āryans". What he meant was, of course, that at present, Westerners in general are still basing their opinions about this question on theories rendered outdated by the recent findings of Indian scholars like himself, and of some paleface scholars as well, - but the latter have so far not carried Western or "white" opinion in general with them.

Dr. Zydenbos, who is described editorially as a European indological scholar living in Mysore, must have found out for himself that being "white" still connotes authority and reliability for most Indians. [116] In heated debates like the one on the Āryan question, reference to Western opinion is still treated as a trump card. Often, this reference is used as a "circular argument of authority": first Western India-watchers borrow their opinions from *Times of India* or the *Economic and Political Weekly*, then they express these opinions in the *New York Times* or the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, and finally, these same opinions are quoted in the same Indian media as authoritative endorsements by "independent" Westerners of their own positions. If a student has been over-awed by the apparent Western consensus in favour of the AIT, Prof. Rao was right to break the spell and to put the student with his feet back on the solid ground of self-reliance, esp. in a field where Western indological opinion happens to be out of touch with the latest research.

Indeed, in his article, Dr. Zydenbos himself unwittingly plays the same game of over-awing the Indians with references to Western indologists, viz. to K. V. Zvelebil, H. Kulke

[115] N. S. Rajaram: *The Politics of History*, p. 98.

[116] It is one of Mahatma Gandhi's achievements that "he made India safe for the white man", as the Indian Communists used to say around the time of Independence. Fact is that he must take credit for the friendly character of the decolonization of India, which led to the situation that Westerners who feel a strong hostility in countries like China and Malaysia, feel like honoured guests in India.

and D. Rothermund, as sheer arguments of authority.[117] Zydenbos refers to Zvelebil to support this statement: "That the Indus Valley people were Dravidians is an unproven hypothesis; but the real, as yet undeciphered writings of that civilization give more support to this hypothesis than to any other."

In fact, the scholars working from the Dravidian hypothesis have, after decades of intensive labour, not conclusively deciphered a single line of the Indus writings, and Zvelebil admits as much: "[The Soviet scholars] have not convincingly deciphered even one single short Harappan description, and they have not been able to offer a verifiable reading of any Harappan text."[118] Of the other teams working on the decipherment, Zvelebil has no hard results to quote either, though he praises their (and the Soviet scholars') merits in structural analysis, preparing concordances etc. He does not mention a single definite and positive (non-circular) indication that the language on the Harappan seals is Dravidian.

In Kulke and Rothermund's book *A History of India* "can be found in detail the up-to-date view concerning the Āryan migration, and confirming it", according to Zydenbos. In fact, their book does not *confirm* (with independent research findings) but merely *restates* the AIT, without refuting or even taking into account the research findings on which Prof. Rajaram and Prof. Rao base their case.

1.4.5 Nehru's testimony

Dr. Zydenbos sums up "a few interesting questions", starting with: "Why should leading, respected Indian scholars (and even Nehru, who can hardly be accused of being politically naive or a colonial collaborator) accept the idea of the migration, if it is as patently false as our author claims it is?" We forego the occasion of preparing a list of factual reasons why "leading, respected scholars" have been found to defend the wrong position on numerous occasions in history. The interesting term in the question is "colonial collaborator", which Nehru is claimed not to have been. In fact, while politically an anti-colonial campaigner, Jawaharlal Nehru was culturally the archetypal "collaborator" with colonialism and with the colonial view of India.

Free India's first Prime Minister never properly mastered his native Hindustani language and like his father, he demanded from his relatives that they speak only English at the dinner table. He was in most cultural respects a typical colonial Englishman ("India's last Viceroy"), fully equipped with the concomitant disdain for Indian and particularly Hindu culture, of which he was 100% ignorant. About the Sanskrit traditions which provide the information relevant to the Āryan question, he knew strictly nothing (in spite of his hereditary caste title *Pandit*), and he could not possibly have written anything about it except what he had read in the standard English textbooks. This can easily be verified in his book *The Discovery of India*, which reads like the history chapter of a tourist guide-

[117]K. V. Zvelebil: *Dravidian Linguistics: An Introduction*, Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, 1990; and H. Kulke and D. Rothermund: *A History of India*, Rupa, Delhi 1991.

[118]K. Zvelebil: *Dravidian Linguistics*, p. 90.

book, but which according to Dr. Zydenbos "in essence still holds good" in its picturesque description of the Āryan invasion.[119]

Nehru shared with many contemporary establishment academics an ideological reason to welcome the AIT. Just as the British liked to flatter themselves with the idea that they had "created" India as a political unit, so Congress politicians liked to see Nehru as the "maker of India".[120] In this view, prior to Queen Victoria and Jawaharlal Nehru, no such cultural entity as "India" ever existed, merely a hunting-ground for ever new waves of invaders, starting with the Āryans. Nehru didn't mind such a past for India, because as a Leftist utopianist, he believed that a great future could be built on any national past, even a very depressing one. It must be said to his credit that from a vision of a fragmented and invasion-ridden India of the past, he did not deduce the impossibility of creating a united and prosperous India in the future, unlike contemporary casteists and separatists.

It must also be admitted that other Indian leaders have accepted the idea of an Āryan invasion without being any the less patriotic for it. Congress leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak (*Arctic Home in the Vedas*, 1903) and Hindu Mahasabha ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (*Hindutva*, 1923) had also interiorized the AIT, simply because it seemed hard to refute. To most English-educated Indians of their time, the prestige of Western scholarship was so overwhelming that it seemed quixotic to go against it. But it was not hard for them to combine patriotism with a belief in a fragmented and conflictual origin of their nation, 3500 years ago. After all, most nations in the world are younger than that. The USA was built on broken treaties, slavery and genocide, only a few centuries ago, yet there exists a heartfelt and legitimate American patriotism. The strange thing is not that Tilak, Nehru and Savarkar could be Indian patriots all while believing in the AIT, but that Marxists and missionaries question the legitimacy of Indian nationhood on the basis of a theory pertaining to events thousands of years in the past.

1.4.6 From Harappa to Ayodhyā

Dr. Zydenbos summons Prof. Rajaram to own up some responsibility for India's communal conflict: "Does he really not see the parallel between Nazi attacks on synagogues in the 1930s and what happened in Ayodhyā on December 6th?" We would not have believed it, but it is there in cold print: an academic tries to score against a fellow academic by arbitrarily linking him with an event which had not yet taken place when the latter's paper was published, and with which he had strictly nothing to do, viz. the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhyā on 6 December 1992.

In a later paper, Prof. Rajaram has accepted the challenge: "From Harappa to Ayodhyā", read at the Indian Institute of World Culture in Bangalore (4 September 1997), discusses

[119] Dr. Zydenbos's use of Nehru as an argument of authority, along with his use of Indian English, has raised questions. A source inside the *Indian Express* office suspected that he had merely lent his name to an article by an Indian author. Zydenbos denied this when I asked him personally about it.

[120] See e.g. M. J. Akbar: *Nehru, the Making of India*, Penguin 1992.

the parallels between the historians' debates on the Indus-Saraswatī civilization and on the temple/mosque in Ayodhyā. He argues that "what the history establishment has done through the models it has proposed for both the ancient and the medieval periods is to *exactly reverse the historical picture*".[121] Most importantly, for the ancient period, Indian Marxist and other anti-Hindu historians posit a massive conflict (between Āryan invaders and natives) in spite of the total absence of either textual or archaeological evidence for such conflict; while for the medieval period, they wax eloquent about an idyllic "composite culture" and deny a massive conflict spanning centuries (viz. between Muslim invaders and Hindu natives), against the copiously available evidence for this conflict, both textual and archaeological.

This observation is entirely correct: both ancient and medieval history have been rewritten in the sense of belittling and blackening Hindu civilization and extolling its enemies. As a Westerner I may add that in both cases, there has been a wholesale, painfully naive endorsement of the Indian Marxist line by Western India-watchers in academe as well as journalism. There are exceptions, mostly in the past, e.g. Fernand Braudel who described Muslim India as a "colonial experiment" which was "extremely violent".[122]

Braudel explained: "India survived only by virtue of its patience, its superhuman power and its immense size. The levies it had to pay were so crushing that one catastrophic harvest was enough to unleash famines and epidemics capable of killing a million people at a time. Appalling poverty was the constant counterpart of the conquerors' opulence. (...) The Muslims (...) could not rule the country except by systematic terror. Cruelty was the norm burnings, summary executions, crucifixions or impalements, inventive tortures. Hindu temples were destroyed to make way for mosques. On occasion there were forced conversions. If ever there were an uprising, it was instantly and savagely repressed: houses were burned, the countryside was laid waste, men were slaughtered and women were taken as slaves."[123] Braudel was not a Hindu chauvinist, just a scholarly observer, but in today's climate, he would be blacklisted.

While there is solid evidence that the Babri Masjid in Ayodhyā had been built in forcible replacement of a Hindu temple, rubble of which was used in the Masjid's construction, this fact has been denounced as "Hindu chauvinist propaganda", and an entirely fictional claim was upheld that the Masjid had been built on an uncontroversial site, so that there was of course no trace of evidence for a preceding temple demolition.[124] Indian Marxists could reasonably have taken the position that while the temple demolition was a historical fact, this was no reason for a counter-demolition today. However, inebriated by their

[121] N. S. Rajaram: *From Harappa to Ayodhya*, Sahitya Sindhu Prakashana, Bangalore 1997, p. 6; emphasis in the original.

[122] Fernand Braudel: A History of Civilizations, Penguin 1988 (1963), p. 236.

[123] *ibid.* p. 232

[124] See K. Elst: "The Ayodhyā debate", in G. Pollet, ed.: *Indian Epic Values*, Peeters, Leuven 1995, p-21-42; and K. Elst: "The Ayodhyā demolition: an evaluation", in Swapan Dasgupta et al.: *The Ayodhyā Reference*, Voice of India, Delhi 1995, p. 123-154.

power position, they went farther and denied the temple destruction altogether, against the evidence, thinking they could get away with it.

As usual, they could count on their Western contacts to cover them: to my knowledge, not a single Western academic has critically examined the Indian Marxist claim that the historical temple demolition at the Babri Masjid site was Hindu chauvinist fiction. All of those who have actually written about the Ayodhyā affair, have acted as amplifiers to the Indian Marxist propaganda, explicitly or implicitly defaming those Indian colleagues who stuck to the evidence that a Hindu temple at the controversial site had indeed been destroyed.

One of these was Prof. B. B. Lal, one of the greatest living archaeologists, who has been attacked for his expert testimony about the demolished temple at the Babri Masjid site (e.g. in an editorial in the Marxist-controlled paper *The Hindu*)[125] as well as for his progressively more determined support to the identity or close kinship of *Ved*ic and Harappan culture.[126] Indeed, on both sides in the Ayodhyā debate and in the AIT debate, both in academic and journalistic platforms, we find the same names. Without conspicuous exception, those who fight for the AIT have also fought for the Ayodhyā no-temple thesis (and more generally for the view that the Islamic occupation of India was benign), and those who fought for the demolished-temple thesis are now fighting for the *Ved*ic-Harappan kinship. So, Dr. Zydenbos is right in positing a parallel between the Ayodhyā and AIT debates, though perhaps it is not the parallel he intended.

1.4.7 The denial of history

As for an Indian counterpart to the Nazi attacks on synagogues, any Hindu worth his salt will definitely welcome the simile. The demolition of literally hundreds of thousands of Hindu places of worship (often along with their personnel and customers) by Muslims, from the first Arab invasion in AD 636 to the destruction of hundreds of temples in Pakistan and Bangladesh and the vandalization of twenty-odd Hindu temples in Britain in "retaliation" for the demolition of the Babri Masjid, is often described in Hindu pamphlets as a "Holocaust". I disapprove of the ease with which every crime is nowadays likened with the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes; but in the present debate, it is Dr. Zydenbos who has uninvitedly introduced Nazi references.

While the erratic and violent manner in which the Babri Masjid was disposed of is certainly deplorable, there is something badly disproportionate in the holy indignation of so many India-watchers about the Ayodhyā demolition, when you notice how it is combined with a stark indifference to the vastly larger and longer record of Islamic destruction in India (including a million Hindus killed by the Pakistani Army in East Bengal as late as 1971), often even with a negationist denial of that very record of Islam in India. Here

[125] "Tampering with history", editorial in *The Hindu*, 12-6-1998. B. B. Lal wrote a reply: "Facts of history cannot be altered", *The Hindu*, 1-7-1998.

[126] B. B. Lal: *New Light on the Indus Civilization*, Aryan Books International, Delhi 1997.

again there is a parallel: informed Hindus are pained by the denial of their centuries of suffering at the hands of Islam, and are likewise pained by the denial of their millennia of civilization-building, a denial which goes by the name of Āryan Invasion Theory.

There may yet be another point to Zydenbos's comparison between Nazi attacks on synagogues and the attacks on places of worship in India. The Islamic swordsmen considered Pagan temples as monuments of *Jahiliyya*, the Age of Ignorance, and they wanted to destroy them in order to stamp out this evil superstition of Paganism and all reminders of its history. In Islamic countries with a great pre-Islamic past, history courses in schools start with Mohammed, and pay minimal (if at all any) attention to the long and fascinating history of the Pharaohs, the Achaemenids or Mohenjo Daro; the intention is to deny an unwanted, "impure" part of history. As recently as 1992, this rejection of history led to raids to the ruins of Buddhist temples in Afghanistan to deface any remaining Buddha statues; and in 1992 and 1997, bomb attacks were committed against the pharaonic temples of Karnak. One could arguably hold it against the demolishers of the Babri mosque that they too have tried to wipe out an unwanted chapter of Indian history embodied in the Islamic architecture of the temple building. Bad enough, but its relevance for our topic is this: for Indians, the AIT likewise implies the *denial of a long stretch of Indian history.*

The AIT denies principally the history of the Solar and Lunar dynasties and other tribes living in *Āryavarta* (the area from Sindh to Bihar and from the Vindhyas to Kashmir), as covered in the Flu for a period from the dawn of proto-history to the 1st millennium BC. The major motifs (epics, artistic standards, schools of philosophy) of Indian civilization are embedded in that history, which is simply denied in its long pre-1500 BC phase, and vilified as merely the cultural superstructure of an ethnic subjugation of pre-Āryans by Āryans in its post-1500 BC phase.

1.4.8 Blood and soil

Dr. Zydenbos continues: "Why should it be so important that the Āryans, or the extremely remote ancestors of anyone in India for that matter, have been in the subcontinent since all eternity? That would come close to the *Blut und Boden* [blood and sod] ideology of Nazism, with its Āryan rhetoric. Why the xenophobia?"

Accusing Prof. Rajaram of something "close to" Nazi ideology looks like an old trick to associate someone with Nazism without taking the responsibility for calling him a Nazi outright and risking a frontal rebuttal if not a court case. I wonder: how would he fare if he accused a Western colleague in the same vein in a Western paper, considering the extreme importance which academics attach to reputation? There, slurs against a colleague's scholarly integrity are normally made to backfire on the slanderer himself. At any rate, AIT defenders display a tendency to exceed the topic of debate and launch unwarranted attacks *ad hominem.*

Favouring the idea that the "Āryan" ancestors of the contemporary Indians have lived in the subcontinent "since all eternity" is what Zydenbos dubs "xenophobic" and "close to

the *Blut und Boden* ideology of Nazism with its Āryan rhetoric". Actually, the historians in the SS research department were inclined to embrace the theory that the Nordic Āryans originated in Atlantis, whence they had fled to northern Europe after the inundation of their homeland. Hitler's attachment was not to the German territory but to the German race, which was free to wander and colonize other lands. Then again, most ordinary Nazis who cared, tended to accept some variation of the European Urheimat Theory, locating their own Āryan ancestors in Germany itself or nearby, "just as" Hindus nowadays locate their Urheimat in or near India itself.

However, it is not Rajaram's school of thought which has given political implications to the question of the geographical provenance of India's population. As we have seen, it is precisely the AIT which has been used systematically as a xenophobic political argument against those groups considered as the progeny of the "Āryan invaders". Even most AIT opponents subscribe to the prevalent theory that mankind probably originated in Africa, so that all Indians, like all Europeans, are ultimately immigrants. The ridiculous argument of doubting the legitimacy of a community's presence in India on the basis of an ancestral immigration of 3500 years ago has been launched in all seriousness by interest groups wielding the AIT as their major intellectual weapon, not by the critics of the AIT.

1.4.9 Nazis in India

As for the Nazi connection, let us at any rate be clear about an easily verifiable fact: in so far as the Nazis cared about Indian history, they favoured the AIT. On the AIT, not Rajaram but Zydenbos is in the same camp with Hitler. The only avowed Nazis in India, the Bengali scholar Dr. Mukherji (ca. 1898-1977) and his French-Greek wife Dr. Maximiani Portas (Lyon 1905-Sible Hedingham, Essex, 1982) alias Savitri Devi Mukherji, had made the AIT itself the alpha and omega of their philosophy.[127] The one Indian who interpreted the AIT explanation of the Hindu caste system in Hitlerian terms, i.e. as a positive realization of the natural hierarchy between the races achieved by the conquering Nordic Āryans and imposed on the dark-skinned natives, was Mukherji, "Brahmin conscious of his distant Nordic roots"[128] who published a pro-Hitler paper, the *New Mercury*, "the only truly Hitlerian paper ever to have appeared in India"[129], from 1935 until the British closed it down in 1937. He was instrumental in establishing the links between the Axis representatives and the leftist Congress leader Subhas Chandra Bose, who formed an *Indian National Army* (1943-45) under Japanese tutelage.

His wife Savitri Devi cited with approval B. G. Tilak's version of the AIT, viz. that the Āryan tribes had come from the Arctic where they had composed the *Ṛg-Veda*. This erratic

[127]About Savitri Devi and her husband, see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke: *Hitler's Priestess. Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Neo-Nazism*, New York University Press, 1998, a book full of details but suffering from the same basic misconceptions as Dr. Zydenbos' article and most Western writing on the "Hindu-Āryan" connection. Also see K. Elst: *The Saffron Swastika*, Voice of India, Delhi 1999.

[128]Savitri Devi Mukherji: *Souvenirs et Réflexions d'une Arjenne*, Delhi 1976, p. 41.

[129]*ibid.* p. 41

theory is inordinately popular among Western racists for providing "independent" Indian confirmation to a North-European Homeland Theory (in reality, Tilak had tried to bend the *Ved*ic evidence, often ludicrously, to bring it in conformity with fashionable Western theories).[130] She also repeated the usual AIT annexe that the upper castes are Āryan immigrants, that the lower castes are largely and the tribals purely "aboriginals", a theory implicitly endorsed (see next para) by Dr. Zydenbos in this very article.[131] In fact, after reading her autobiography, *"Memories and Reflexions of an Āryan Lady"*, there is not the slightest doubt left that for her and her husband, their belief in the AIT, along with their distortive reinterpretation of Hindu tradition in terms of the AIT, was the direct cause of their enthusiasm for Hitler. If Zydenbos shuns theories with Hitlerian connotations, he should drop the AIT at once.

Indeed, the AIT happens to have the same historical roots as the race theories centred on white superiority which culminated in Nazi racism. in the 19th-century race theories, Indian civilization had to be the work of white people, who, like the modern Europeans, had colonized India by subjugating the dark natives; later, the mixing of the white Āryans (in spite of a belated attempt to preserve their purity through the caste system) with the dark natives caused the decline and "feminization" of the conquering Āryan culture, which invited a new conquest by Europeans taking up the "white man's burden" of bringing order and enlightenment to the dark-skinned people living in social, intellectual and spiritual darkness. The AIT was an essential part of this view, and Nazism a slight radicalization.

While we let the topic of Nazism rest, we have to mention another "blood and soil" movement which has emerged in India, and again its basis was not Rajaram's denial of the AIT, but Zydenbos's AIT itself. The Dravidian movement, started with colonial and missionary funding and aid in 1916 (founding of the *Justice Party* in Madras, later renamed as *Dravida Kazhagam*) to counter the Freedom Movement, was based precisely on the AIT notion that the North Indians as well as the South Indian Brahmins were "Āryan invaders" who had stolen the land from the Dravidian natives. Militants of this movement roughed up Brahmins and Hindi-speaking people, and its leader Ramaswamy Naicker gained notoriety with statements like: "We will do with the Brahmins what Hitler did with the Jews." When the Chinese invasion of 1962 made Indians aware of the need for national unity, the demand for a separate Dravidian state was abandoned, and the anti-Brahmin drive lost its edge as Brahmin predominance in public office diminished.

Meanwhile, the AIT-related doctrines of this movement have started a second life in a section of the Dalit (ex-Untouchable) movement, which attacks upper-caste people as

[130] *ibid.* p. 27 and p. 272, with reference to B. G. Tilak & Hermann Jacobi: *Arctic Home in the Vedas*, Pune 1903. Tilak and Jacobi had met after separately concluding that astronomical data in the *Ṛg-Veda* indicated its time of composition as ca. 4000 BC, see B. G. Tilak: *Orion, or Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas*, Pune 1893. A detailed and convincing refutation of Tilak's arguments for the polar homeland is given by N. R. Waradpande: "The Home of the Aryans: an Astronomical Approach", in S. B. Deo & Suryanath Kamath: *The Aryan Problem*, Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalana Samiti, Pune 1993, p. 123-134, and in Shrikant Talageri: *The Ṛg-Veda, An Historical Analysis*, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, forthcoming.

[131] *ibid.* p. 157

"Āryan invaders", a notion which they could have borrowed directly from Dr. Zydenbos's article. Here again, slurs of "Nazism" against the supposed "Āryans" mask a vision of Indian society directly rooted in the very views which generated Nazism itself.

1.4.10 Āryans vs. Indians

The closing paragraph of "An obscurantist argument" (1.4.1) reiterates the outdated notion that India's upper castes are the progeny of the "Āryan invaders" and pride themselves on it: "We can briefly sum up the 'Āryan problem' and the interest it creates among certain people as follows. Whatever problem is there, will not be solved by constructing a new bit of mythology on the theme of the evil foreign hand and the Indian academic community that is supposed to have no mind of its own. This has no basis in fact. Only certain people in certain castes who identify themselves strongly with the Āryans and pride themselves on being 'Āryan' rather than Indian, and thereby stress their difference from (and assume superiority to) other Indians, have a problem. As soon as the author [= N. S. Rajaram], and people of his ilk, make up their minds as to whether they are Indian or not, and whether they want to identify themselves with India and other Indians or not, the problem is solved."

That the Indian academic community "has no mind of its own" has the following basis in fact: India has only just begun to decolonize at the intellectual level, and the view of Indian history instilled in the pupils of India's elite schools is still strictly the view inherited from colonial historiography. In another sense, however, the anglicized academic establishment certainly has a mind of its own: while the colonial British still had a condescending sympathy for native culture, the new elite is waging a war against it as a matter of cultural self-exorcism and of political class interest. It knows its own mind very well and has concluded that the AIT serves its interests better than a version of history which would boost native Indian self-respect. Of course, India is not the Soviet Union of Stalin's and Lysenko's days, so when the international academic opinion shifts away from the AIT, the Indian establishment will have to follow suit; but as long as the matter is in the balance, it throws its entire weight on the side of the AIT.

If certain people in certain castes "pride themselves on being 'Āryan' rather than Indian", it means they have accepted the AIT, which posits the initial non-Indianness of the "Āryans" and identifies them with the upper castes. Of course, this view has no takers among traditionalist upper-caste Hindus, who pride themselves on being the progeny of the *Ved*ic poets and epic heroes revered as the sources of Indian civilization. For them, it is not "Āryan rather than Indian", but "Ārya, or Indian par excellence".

Prof. Rajaram "and people of his ilk" have long made up their minds about whether they are Indian or not. That is why they feel strongly about the divisive effect to which the AIT has been used, first by interested outside forces (Zydenbos's sarcastic "evil foreign hand") who have tried to stress the difference - of the "Āryans" from other Indians as a weapon against native self-reassertion, and subsequently by sectional interest groups in

India. Their first motive for arguing against the AIT is the sound academic consideration that it seems to bit contradicted by the evidence. And this evidence is not nullified at all by their secondary, political motive: the desire to stop the pernicious influence of the AIT on India's unity and integrity.

1.5 SOME RED HERRINGS

1.5.1 Āryans and social mobility

Like Dr. Zydenbos in the passage discussed in the preceding section, some Indian scholars impute to the AIT critics motives or presuppositions which themselves imply the AIT, and which exist only in the eye of the beholder, meaning the AIT believer. Thus, Prof. Romila Thapar argues against a rigid view of caste history which she imputes to the Hindu nationalists: "Moralizing on the evils of caste precluded the need to (. . .) recognize the large area of negotiation which, to some degree, permitted certain castes to shape their status. For example, families of obscure origin and some even said to be of the lower castes, rose to political power and many legitimized their power by successfully claiming upper caste *kshatriya* status. To concede these facts would have contradicted the theory that the upper castes are the lineal descendants of the Āryans".[132]

It will be clear that "the theory that the upper castes are the lineal descendants of the Āryans" is part of the standard version of the AIT. While an earlier generation of Hindu nationalists may still have believed this theory in deference to the prestige of Western scholarship, this is not the case at all with the post-Independence Hindu nationalists, and most certainly not with the Hindu nationalist AIT critics whom Prof. Thapar is countering. They have no problem with the insight that "lower castes rose to political power and legitimized their power by successfully claiming upper caste *kshatriya* status".

On the contrary, such historical processes of social mobility corroborate the unity of the Hindu nation: even if there were such a thing as Āryan invasions, such upward (and corresponding downward) social mobility would have ensured that you find both Āryans and non-Āryans in both the upper and lower layers of Hindu society. An ethnic divide which may or may not have existed in Hindu society is neutralized and dissolved by such social processes, and this gives Hindu nationalists reason to applaud them.

1.5.2 Role of the non-Āryans

Another example of how AIT champions impute to the AIT critics motives or presuppositions which themselves imply the AIT, is this remark by Marxist columnist Yoginder Sikand: "It is significant that while asserting the indigenous origins of the Āryans, the existence of the Dravidian and other non-Āryan races native to India is not denied. After all, if it were asserted that all Indians are Āryans, it would not be possible to justify the

[132] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 11.

racist caste system. While acknowledging the presence in India of non-Āryan indigenous races, their cultural contributions are completely ignored in the discourse of Hindutva. (...) the Hindutvawadis now assert that the Indus Valley civilization, which is generally accepted to be of Dravidian and pre-Āryan origin, was built by the Āryans. By asserting the native origins of the Āryans, and by attributing all the finer aspects of Indian culture to their supposed genius, the rich cultural legacy of the non-Āryan Indian races is effectively denied."[133]

We may forego discussion of Sikand's obvious lack of knowledge of the present state of research, e.g. his mistaken assumption that there exists any evidence for the oft-assumed Dravidian character of the Harappan civilization.

The point is that he imputes to the AIT critics the desire to "justify the caste system", the consent to the common belief that the caste system has a "racist" basis, the belief in a division between "Āryans" on the one hand and "Dravidian and other non-Āryan races" on the other, and the denial of the "cultural contributions" of these "non-Āryan indigenous races". Underlying all this, and very conspicuous in Sikand's discourse, is the assumption that it is a "racial" affair, an assumption emphatically criticized and rejected in practically all anti-AIT publications of the past decade.[134]

Likewise, the specific theory of a "racial" basis of the caste system has been denied by Hindu and other nationalists from Dr. Ambedkar on down. That the AIT is criticized in a bid to "justify the caste system", racist or otherwise, is not suggested by a reading of any of the AIT critiques known to me, let alone any cited by Sikand, who doesn't mention any of the recent and learned critiques. Like a cowardly big boy picking fights with little boys, Sikand prefers to focus on Hindu Nationalist ideologue (and non-historian) M .S. Golwalkar's 1939 musings about the "Arctic home" of the Āryans having been in India before the earth's polar axis shifted to its present position.[135] Much of his attention is also devoted to semi-literate pamphletists who argue that everything worthwhile in the world has been created by Hindus, citing as evidence some silly pseudo-etymologies like *Jerusalem = Yadu Śalyam*, "shrine of *Yadu/Kṛṣṇa*". But he bravely avoids any confrontation with serious historians.

The only historian cited is Balraj Madhok, former president of the Jana Sangh, predecessor (1952-77) of the BJP (1980): "He is of the view that the Āryans were the natives of the *Sapta-Sindhu* region while various non-Āryan tribes inhabited the rest of India". Though Madhok is by no means a specialist of ancient history and the Ārya debate, his view makes good sense; it is one of the several possible interpretations of the evidence supporting the rejection of the AIT. Yet Sikand calls him one of those who "care little for historical truth, academic objectivity and consistency".

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[133] Yoginder Sikand: "Exploding the Aryan myth", *Observer of Business and Politics*, 30-10-1993.

[134] Most prominently in Paramesh Choudhury: *The Aryan Hoax that Dupes the Indians*, Calcutta 1995, which reproduces in appendix the UNESCO statement on racism, *The Race Question in Modern Science*, ca. 1950, and quotes from it on the cover: "The so-called Aryan 'people' or 'race' is a mere myth."

[135] Reference is to M. S. Golwalkar: *We, Our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur 1939.

The identification of "Āryan" with the Indo-Āryan speech community of the northern subcontinent and Sri Lanka, hence the conception of "Āryan" as the opposite of "Dravidian", is also extraneous to the Hindu tradition. Many AIT critics emphasize that a Dravidian could be classified as *Ārya* while a speaker of Indo-Āryan languages could be *an-Ārya* if he abandoned the practice of *Ved*ic tradition (e.g. by converting to Islam). Some of these critics, from Sri Aurobindo to N. R. Waradpande and Subhash Kak, go as far as to question the linguistic concept of Indo-European and Dravidian as distinct language families.[136] I believe they are mistaken, but at any rate, their views are strictly incompatible with the political programme of Āryans locking native Dravidians into the racist caste system, which Yoginder Sikand imputes to them.

1.5.3 Hitler again

Hitler's use of the Sanskrit-derived term "Āryan" was bound to suggest a new line of Hindu-baiting. And effectively, while commenting on the enthusiasm in Hindu Nationalist circles about recent discoveries supporting the Indian origin of the Indo-European or "Āryan" language family, Yoginder Sikand alleges that "the Hindutvawadis, like their Nazi counterparts, fanatically believe in the thoroughly discredited Āryan master-race theory".[137] Having read most of the Hindu Nationalist writings on the Āryan question, I am confident that there does not exist a single statement on their part which admits of the interpretation given by Yoginder Sikand.

Historically, Hitler's Āryan master race theory and Yoginder Sikand's cherished Āryan invasion theory have the same roots. It is precisely the refutation of this Āryan Invasion Theory which is a hot issue in Hindutva circles; and it is the anti-Hindutva polemicists like Yoginder Sikand who uphold the European racists' AIT and who ridicule the attempts to refute it. Some earlier Hindu leaders, esp. Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Veer Savarkar, had accepted the voguish Āryan Invasion theory, though they (rightfully) refused to attach any practical importance to this issue of geographical provenance. But the dominant opinion in Hindutva circles today is that the native Hindu (*Ved*ic and *Purāṇ*ic) tradition had it right when it consistently assumed Sanskritic culture to be native to India. Indeed, Yoginder Sikand's own article was written in anticipation of a symposium organized by the RSS-affiliated Deendayal Research Institute to bring together different scholarly contributions to the *refutation* of the Āryan Invasion Theory so dear to the Nazis.

1.5.4 The Muslim factor

Indian Marxists have the power but lack the numbers, so they have cultivated alliances with all actual or potential enemies of Hinduism. Most importantly, they have assiduously sought to ingratiate themselves with India's large Muslim community (about 13% of the

[136] See e.g. Subhash Kak: "Is there an Aryan/Dravidian binary?", www.indiastar.com, 1998.
[137] Yoginder Sikand: "Exploding the Aryan myth", *Observer of Business and Politics*, 30-10-1993.

population), and in any debate with Hindu nationalists, they will invariably try to drag in some Muslim angle to the topic at hand. Their last trump card against the anti-AIT argument is that it is somehow anti-Muslim: "The Hindutva version of the theory became a mechanism for excluding some sections of Indian society, specifically Indian Muslims and Christians, by insisting that they are alien." [138] Or: "If Muslims have to be projected as the sole invaders of this land, the Āryans need to be presented as natives ... If the Muslims are to be projected as traitors, bereft of any attachment to this land, they need to be presented as the only outsider." [139]

Dr. Edwin Bryant reports: "Although in various other academic fields and area studies, such as race science, postcolonial scholarship has completely deconstructed and exposed the colonial investment in the propagation of certain theories, the field of Indology, at least in present-day Western academic circles, has been very suspicious of these voices being raised against the theory of the Āryan invasions" [140] He cited distrust of "political subtexts", in particular hidden anti-Muslim motives, as the reason why Indologists are reluctant to take up the rethinking of the Āryan question.

However, the deduction of exclusionary politics from a theory of Āryan origins has for a hundred years been the monopoly of the invasionist school. Its central argument has always been that the Brahmins and other upper-caste Hindus are foreign invaders in illegal occupation of whatever power they have in India. If "political subtexts" render a theory unrespectable, those Indologists should stay away from the AIT, and take a very critical second look at their own anti-Brahmin prejudice.

The non-invasionist school has strictly refrained from this line of rhetoric. Thus, no non-invasionist critic has so far tried to incorporate the fairly popular theory of a Dravidian invasion as an extra polemical point against the Dravidian separatists, much less to deduce from it that Dravidians are mere invaders with no right to stay in India. Most of them reject the hypothesis of a Dravidian invasion along with that of an Āryan invasion.

In certain factions of Hindu nationalism, it is not uncommon to find Muslims described as traitors. [141] After the Partition, which turned millions of Hindus into foreigners in their places of birth overnight, which put at least seven million of them to flight, and which may have killed up to half a million of them, it is not surprising that many Hindus remember how that Partition was imposed on an unwilling Hindu majority by an intransigent Muslim minority. Of course, generalizations about groups of people are dangerous and unwarranted, and the simplistic crudeness of some RSS discourse about Muslims is deplorable. Yet, even the grossest RSS blockhead hasn't stooped to calling them "alien". Though their religion is undeniably of alien origin, and though many of them cultivate imaginary Arab genealogies for themselves, the Indian Muslims are mostly the progeny of Hindu converts to Islam. This

[138] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 10.
[139] Yoginder Sikand: "Exploding the Aryan myth", *Observer of Business and Politics*, 30-10-1993.
[140] Edwin Bryant: "The Indo-Āryan invasion debate: the politics of a discourse", WAVES conference, Los Angeles. August 1998, abstract.
[141] See e.g. M. S. Golwalkar: *Bunch of Thoughts*, Jagarana Prakashan, Bangalore 1984 (1966).

fact, far from being denied, is frequently cited in RSS literature as a basis for reclaiming these Muslims for Indian nationalism if not for Hinduism.

At any rate, most AIT critics have never had anything to do with anti-Muslim politics, e.g. K. D. Sethna and B. B. Lal are elderly scholars who try to stay out of politics. A few have made legitimate critiques of specific Islamic policies in India, e.g. Shrikant Talageri has discussed the glorification of Islamic elements in Indian culture and the corresponding disparaging of purely Hindu elements by schoolbooks and the Mumbai film industry.[142] No Muslim has died because of that. For many, the Āryan debate in the mid-1990s came as a fresh breeze after the intense Hindu-Muslim conflict of ca. 1990. At last, a revolution without enemies!

Conversely, most Islamic polemicists have taken to using the AIT in their anti-Hindu writings. As Syed Shahabuddin once put it in an editorial of his monthly *Muslim India*: if invaders have to quit India, the Āryans as the first invaders will have to quit first.

1.5.5 Pakistani Indus, Bharatiya Saraswatī

Another frequently-heard red herring is that the anti-AIT school is emphasizing the Saraswatī basin as the centre of Harappan (and *Ved*ic) culture at the expense of the Indus because the Indus now lies in Pakistan. Thus: "The discovery of Harappan sites on the Indian side of the border between India and Pakistan is viewed as compensating for the loss of the cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa which are located in Pakistan."[143]

Here again, we are faced with a projection by an outsider to Hindu nationalism. For Hindu nationalists, the Indus basin has not ceased to be part of India just because a state of Pakistan was created. To the indignation of Indian Marxists, the Hindu nationalists take a long-term view of their motherland: over the centuries, numerous empires have come and gone, native as well as foreign, and they all had their temporary borders, but the basic identity of India was not affected by these. The Marxists don't believe in this timeless India, but the Hindu nationalists are confident that the territory which is now Pakistan will revert to the bosom of Mother India in due course.

The insistence that a political motive explains the renewed emphasis on the Saraswatī basin ignores a more obvious reason for paying due scholarly attention to the Saraswatī basin: that is where most of the "Harappan" cities have been found. When people conspicuously disregard facts, it may be appropriate to wonder what motive they might have for this strange behaviour. But when they fully take the facts into account, there is no reason to suspect ulterior motives, except in the minds of the suspecters.

[142] Shrikant Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism*, introduction.

[143] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 16.

1.5.6 Āryans as servants of imperialism

The reduction of Brahminism or Hinduism to the residue of the Āryan invasion is deductively taken to the most absurd lengths. Thus, a Christian theologian involved in Dalit politics alleges that the upper castes collaborated with the Muslim conquerors for the following reason: "Perhaps as descendants of the Āryan invaders into this country prior to the Moghuls and the British the advocates of *Ārya dharma* could not outright condemn aggression and exploitation."[144] Well, most aggressors and exploiters don't feel that much solidarity with those who come to subject them in their turn to aggression and exploitation.

Likewise, Yoginder Sikand alleges: "The British invasion is, of course, not to be talked of at all, in line with the consistent and time-tested pro-imperialist line of the Hindutva brigade."[145] In fact, of the four Hindu leaders he attacks in his article, two were prominent leaders of the freedom movement who spent years in British prisons (Tilak and Savarkar), and the two others (Golwalkar and Madhok) have never lagged behind in anti-imperialist rhetoric, against fading British as well as against threatening Soviet and Chinese imperialism; all four are known for their critical view of Islamic imperialism.

This kind of wild allegation has to do with the Communists' bad conscience about their collaboration with the British against the freedom movement in 1941-45. Any detailed analysis of politicized AIT polemic ends up having to deal with the whole history of Indian Marxism, the Pakistan movement and other anti-Hindu forces.

1.6 CONCLUSION

Prof. Edmund Leach, Provost of King's College, Cambridge, has aptly written: "Why do serious scholars persist in believing in the Āryan invasions? (...) Why is this sort of thing attractive? Who finds it attractive? Why has the development of early Sanskrit come to be so dogmatically associated with an Āryan invasion? (...) The details of this theory fit in with this racist framework (...) The origin myth of British colonial imperialism helped the elite administrators in the Indian Civil Service to see themselves as bringing 'pure' civilization to a country in which civilization of the most sophisticated (but 'morally corrupt') kind was already nearly 6,000 years old. Here I will only remark that the hold of this myth on the British middle-class imagination is so strong that even today, 44 years after the death of Hitler and 43 years after the creation of an independent India and independent Pakistan the Āryan invasions of the second millennium BC are still treated as if they were an established fact of history".[146]

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[144] Israel Selvanayagam: "The roots of Hindu fundamentalism - a historical overview", *Asia Journal of Theology*, Bangalore, Oct. 1996, p. 445.

[145] Yoginder Sikand: "Exploding the Aryan myth", *Observer of Business and Politics*, 30.10.1993.

[146] E. Leach in E. Ohnuki-Tierney, ed.: *Culture through Time, Anthropological Approaches*, Stanford 1990, p. 242-243, quoted by Dilip K. Chakrabarti in his review of Asko Parpola: *Deciphering the Indus Script*, Cambridge University Press 1994, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, November 1995, p. 428-430.

Today, the unquestioning belief in the Āryan invasion is giving way to a debate. However, many bonafide scholars hesitate to participate in that debate because they correctly sense that all kinds of political strings are attached to the different positions. The present paper has mapped a few of these political influences.

The debate on the Āryan Invasion Theory is not logically affected by the political motives of its participants, though these motives are sometimes palpable through the rhetoric used. Mapping these motives as a matter of history of ideas (and not as a way to decide the AIT question itself by means of political association) allows us to point out the following: on the pro-AIT side, justification of European colonialism, illustration of the racist worldview, delegitimation of Hinduism as India's native religion by missionaries of foreign religions, Indian Marxist attempts to delegitimize Indian nationalism, and several separatisms in India seeking to bolster the case against Indian unity; and on the anti-AIT side, Indian nationalism seeking to make India's civilisational unity more robust, and to score a point against the aforementioned "anti-national forces".

Leach was among the first to recognize that the word *rice*, from Tamil-derived Greek *oryza*, ultimately stems from Sanskrit *vrīhi*, and not some other way around. The etymology of *vrīhi* as allegedly Dravidian was always a showpiece of the Dravidian substratum theory, hence of the AIT.

Chapter 2

Astronomical Data and the Āryan Question

2.1 DATING THE *ṚG-VEDA*

The determination of the age in which *Ved*ic literature started and flourished has its consequences for the Āryan Invasion question. The oldest text, the *Ṛg-Veda*, is full of precise references to places and natural phenomena in what are now Panjab and Haryana, and was unmistakably composed in that part of India. The date at which it was composed is a firm *terminus ante quem* for the entry of the *Ved*ic Āryans into India. They may have come from abroad or they may have been fully native, but by the time of the *Ṛg-Veda*, they were certainly Indians without memory of a foreign homeland.

In a rather shoddy way, Friedrich Max Müller launched the hypothesis that the *Ṛg-Veda* had to be dated to about 1200 BC, and even though he later retracted it, that arbitrary guess has become the orthodoxy.[1] It is forgotten too often that in his own day, other scholars rejected this extremely late date on a variety of grounds. Maurice Winternitz based his estimate on purely philological considerations: "We cannot explain the development of the whole of this great literature if we assume as late a date as round about 1200 BC or 1500 BC as its starting-point."[2] Isn't it refreshing to find how logical and unprejudiced the early researchers were? You cannot credibly cram the complicated linguistic, cultural and philosophical developments which are in evidence in *Ved*ic literature, into just a few centuries.

But since this argument of plausibility can always be countered with the argument that unlikely developments are not strictly impossible, we need a firmer basis to decide this

[1] The story of Max Müller's chronology and its impact is told by N. S. Rajaram: *The Politics of History*, Voice of India, Delhi 1995, ch. 3.

[2] M. Winternitz: *History of Indian Literature* (1907, reprint by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1987), vol. 1, p. 288.

chronological question. The most explicit chronology would be provided by astronomical markers of time.

2.2 ANCIENT HINDU ASTRONOMY

2.2.1 Astronomical tables

One of the earliest estimates of the date of the *Veda*s was at once among the most scientific. In 1790, the Scottish mathematician John Playfair demonstrated that the starting-date of the astronomical observations recorded in the tables still in use among Hindu astrologers (of which three copies had reached Europe between 1687 and 1787) had to be 4300 BC.[3] His proposal was dismissed as absurd by some, but it was not refuted by any scientist.

Playfair's judicious use of astronomy was countered by John Bentley with a Scriptural argument which we now must consider invalid. In 1825, Bentley objected: "By his [= Playfair's] attempt to uphold the antiquity of Hindu books against absolute facts, he thereby supports all those horrid abuses and impositions found in them, under the pretended sanction of antiquity. Nay, his aim goes still deeper, for by the same means he endeavours to overturn the Mosaic account, and sap the very foundation of our religion: for if we are to believe in the antiquity of Hindu books, as he would wish us, then the Mosaic account is all a fable, or a fiction."[4]

Bentley did not object to astronomy per se, in so far as it could be helpful in showing up the falsehood of Brahminical scriptures. However, it did precisely the reverse. Falsehood in this context could have meant that the Brahmins falsely claimed high antiquity for their texts by presenting as ancient astronomical observations recorded in Scripture what were in fact back-calculations from a much later age. But Playfair showed that this was impossible.

Back-calculation of planetary positions is a highly complex affair requiring knowledge of a number of physical laws, universal constants and actual measurements of densities, diameters and distances. Though Brahminical astronomy was remarkably sophisticated for its time, it could only back-calculate planetary position of the presumed *Ved*ic age with an inaccuracy margin of at least several degrees of arc. With our modern knowledge, it is easy to determine what the actual positions were, and what the results of back-calculations with the Brahminical formulae would have been, e.g.: "Aldebaran was therefore $40'$ before the point of the vernal equinox, according to the Indian astronomy, in the year 3102 before Christ. (...) [Modern astronomy] gives the longitude of that star $13'$ from the vernal

[3] Playfair's argumentation, "Remarks on the astronomy of the Brahmins", Edinburgh 1790, is reproduced in Dharampal: *Indian Science and Technology in the Eighteenth Century*, Academy of Gandhian Studies, Hyderabad 1983 (Impex India, Delhi 1971), p. 69-124.

[4] John Bentley: *Hindu Astronomy*, republished by Shri Publ., Delhi 1990, p.xxvii; also discussed by Richard L. Thompson: "World Views: Vedic vs. Western", *The India Times*, 31-3-1993. On p. 111, we find that Bentley has "proven" that *Kṛṣṇa* was born on 7 August in AD 600 (the most conservative estimate elsewhere is the 9th century BC), and on p. 158ff., that Varaha Mihira (AD 510-587) was a contemporary of the Moghul emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605).

equinox, at the time of the Calyougham, agreeing, within 53′, with the determination of the Indian astronomy. This agreement is the more remarkable, that the Brahmins, by their own rules for computing the motion of the fixed stars, could not have assigned this place to Aldebaran for the beginning of Calyougham, had they calculated it from a modern observation. For as they make the motion of the fixed stars too great by more than 3″ annually, if they had calculated backward from 1491, they would have placed the fixed stars less advanced by 4° or 5°, at their ancient epoch, than they have actually done." [5]

So, it turns out that the data given by the Brahmins corresponded not with the results deduced from their formulae, but with the actual positions, and this, according to Playfair, for nine different astronomical parameters. This is a bit much to explain away as coincidence or sheer luck.

2.2.2 Ancient observation, modern confirmation

That Hindu astronomical lore about ancient times cannot be based on later back-calculation, was also argued by Playfair's contemporary, the French astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly: "The motions of the stars calculated by the Hindus before some 4500 years vary not even a single minute from the [modern] tables of Cassini and Meyer. The Indian tables give the same annual variation of the moon as that discovered by Tycho Brahe - a variation unknown to the school of Alexandria and also the Arabs." [6]

Prof. N. S. Rajaram, a mathematician who has worked for NASA, comments: "fabricating astronomical data going back thousands of years calls for knowledge of Newton's Law of Gravitation and the ability to solve differential equations." [7] Failing this advanced knowledge, the data in the Brahminical tables must be based on actual observation. Ergo, the Sanskrit-speaking *Ved*ic seers were present in person to record astronomical observations and preserve them for a full 6,000 years: "The observations on which the astronomy of India is founded, were made more than three thousand years before the Christian era. (...) Two other elements of this astronomy, the equation of the sun's centre and the obliquity of the ecliptic (...) seem to point to a period still more remote, and to fix the origin of this astronomy 1000 or 1200 years earlier, that is, 4300 years before the Christian era". [8]

All this at least on the assumption that Playfair's, Bailly's and Rajaram's claims about the Hindu astronomical tables are correct. Disputants may start by proving them factually wrong, but should not enter the dispute arena without a refutation of the astronomers' assertions. It is something of a scandal that Playfair's and Bailly's findings have been lying around for two hundred years while linguists and indologists were publishing speculations on *Ved*ic chronology in stark disregard for the contribution of astronomy.

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[5] J. Playfair in Dharampal: *Indian Science and Technology*, p. 87.
[6] Quoted in S. Sathe: *In Search for the Year of the Bharata War*, Navabharati, Hyderabad 1982, p. 32.
[7] N. S. Rajaram: *The Politics of History*, p. 47.
[8] J. Playfair in Dharampal: *Indian Science and Technology*, p-118.

2.2.3 The start of *Kali-Yuga*

Hindu tradition makes mention of the conjunction of the "seven planets" (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, sun and moon) and *Ketu* (southern lunar node, the northern node/ *Rāhu* being by definition in the opposite location) near the fixed star *Revati* (*Zeta Piscium*) on 18 February 3102 BC. This date, at which *Kṛṣṇa* is supposed to have breathed his last, is conventionally the start of the so-called *Kali-Yuga*, the "age of strife", the low point in a declining sequence of four ages. However, modern scholars have claimed that the *Kali-Yuga* system of time-reckoning was a much younger invention, not attested before the 6th century AD.

Against this modernist opinion, Bailly and Playfair had already shown that the position of the moon (the fastest-moving "planet", hence the hardest to back-calculate with precision) at the beginning of *Kali-Yuga*, 18 February 3102, as given by Hindu tradition, was accurate to 37′.[9] Either the Brahmins had made an incredibly lucky guess, or they had recorded an actual observation on *Kali-Yuga* day itself.

Richard L. Thompson claims that in Indian literature and inscriptions, there are a number of datelines expressed in *Kali-Yuga* which are older than the Christian era (and *a fortiori* older than the 6th century AD).[10] More importantly, Thompson argues that the *Jyotiṣa-śāstra*s (treatises on astronomy and, increasingly, astrology, starting in the 14th century BC with the *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa* as per its own astronomical data, but mostly from the first millennium AD) are correct in mentioning this remarkable conjunction on that exact day, for there was indeed a conjunction of sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, *Ketu* and *Revati*.

True, the conjunction was not spectacularly exact, having an orb of 37° between the two most extreme planetary positions. But that precisely supports the hypothesis of an actual observation as opposed to a back-calculation. Indeed, if the Hindu astronomers were able to calculate this position after a lapse of many centuries (when the *Jyotiṣa-śāstra*s was written), it is unclear what reason they would have had for picking out that particular conjunction. Surely, such conjunctions are spectacular to those who witness one, and hence worth recording if observed. But they are not that exceptional when considered over millennia: even closer conjunctions of all visible planets do occur (most recently on 5 February 1962).[11] If the Hindu astronomers had simply been going over their astronomical tables looking for an exceptional conjunction, they could have found more spectacular ones

[9] J. Playfair in Dharampal: *Indian Science and Technology*, p. 88-89.

[10] R. L. Thompson: *Vedic Cosmography and Astronomy*, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles 1989, p. 19-24. Unfortunately, he gives no examples of the early use of *Kali-Yuga*, contenting himself with references to Indian publications offering such examples, unlikely to convince Western scholars, viz. S. D. Kulkarni: *Adi Sankara*, Bombay 1987, and G. C. Agrawala: *Age of Bharata War*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1979. Kulkarni's book (p. 281ff) offers *Kali-Yuga* dates such as 509 BC, but from marginal Sanskrit sources which most Western scholars would consider unreliable.

[11] On that day, Hindu astrologers gathered for prayer-sessions on hilltops to avert the impending catastrophe; they were moderately successful.

than the one on 18 February 3102 BC. And why would they have calculated tables for such a remote period, sixteen centuries before the Āryan "invasion", nineteen before the composition of the *Ṛg-Ved*ic hymns, a time of which they had no recollection?

2.3 THE PRECESSION OF THE EQUINOX

2.3.1 The slowest hand on the clock

The truly strong evidence for a high chronology of the *Veda*s is the *Ved*ic information about the position of the equinox. The phenomenon of the "precession of the equinoxes" takes the ecliptical constellations (also known as the sidereal Zodiac, i.e. those constellations through which the sun passes) [12] slowly past the vernal equinox point, i.e. the intersection of ecliptic and equator, rising due East on the horizon. The whole tour is made in about 25,791 years, the longest cycle manageable for naked-eye observers. If data about the precession are properly recorded, they provide the best and often the only clue to an absolute chronology for ancient events.

If we can read the *Ved*ic and post-*Ved*ic indications properly, they mention constellations on the equinox points which were there from 4,000 BC for the *Ṛg-Veda* (Orion, as already pointed out by B. G. Tilak) [13] through around 3100 BC for the *Atharva-Veda* and the core *Mahābhārata* (Aldebaran) down to 2,300 BC for the *Sūtra*s and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (Pleiades). [14]

Other references to the constellational position of the solstices or of solar and lunar positions at the beginning of the monsoon confirm this chronology. Thus, the *Kauṣitaki Brāhmaṇa* puts the winter solstice at the new moon of the sidereal month of *Māgha* (i.e. the *Mahāśivarātri* festival), which now falls 70 days later: this points to a date in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC. The same processional movement of the twelve months of the

[12] The sidereal Zodiac, used in astrology by most Hindu and some Western astrologers, consists of the actually visible constellations on the ecliptic. It is contrasted with the tropical Zodiac, an abstract division of the ecliptic in twelve equal sectors of which the first one starts by definition at the equinox axis. This tropical Zodiac, used by most Western and some Hindu astrologers, is unrelated to the background of constellations (it could be constructed even if the universe consisted only of the sun and the earth); but it does not figure anywhere in the present discussion. As far as we know, the process of abstraction from visible constellations to geometrical sectors took place only in the Hellenistic period, ca. 100 BC, and was unknown to the *Ved*ic seers, though they did know the solstice axis and equinox axis.

[13] We are aware that the equinox axis never points exactly towards the constellation Orion, which lies south of the ecliptic; but it is understandable that the relatively starless area between the constellations of Gemini and Taurus was named after the conspicuous constellation Orion which lies nearby on the same longitude.

[14] Remark that the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, the high tide of the Harappan cities, is also identified by K. D. Sethna (*KarpAsa in Prehistoric India: a Chronological and Cultural Clue*, Impex India, Delhi 1981) as the period of the *Sūtra*s, the *Veda*s being assigned to the pre-Harappan period, all on the basis of the evidence of material culture (with special focus on cotton/*karpāsa*) as attested in the literary and archaeological records. According to Asko Parpola, Indus Saraswatī seal 430 (reasonably datable to the 24th century BC) depicting the Seven Sisters seems to refer to the observation of the Pleiades.

Hindu calendar (which are tied to the constellations) vis-à-vis the meterological seasons, is what allowed Hermann Jacobi to fix the date of the *Ṛg-Veda* to the 5^{th}-4^{th} millennium BC.[15] Indeed, the regular references to the full moon's position in a constellation at the time of the beginning of the monsoon, which nearly coincides with the summer solstice, provide a secure and unambiguous chronology through the millennial *Ved*ic literature.

It is not only the *Ved*ic age which is moved a number of centuries deeper into the past, when comparing the astronomical indications with the conventional chronology. Even the Gupta age (and implicitly the earlier ages of the Buddha, the Mauryas etc.) could be affected. Indeed, the famous playwright and poet Kālidāsa, supposed to have worked at the Gupta court in about 400 AD, wrote that the monsoon rains started at the start of the sidereal month of *Āṣāḍha*; this timing of the monsoon was accurate in the last centuries BC.[16] This implicit astronomy-based chronology of Kālidāsa, about 5 centuries higher than the conventional one, tallies well with the traditional "high" chronology of the Buddha, whom Chinese Buddhist tradition dates to ca. 1100 BC, and the implicit *Purāṇ* ic chronology even to ca. 1700 BC.[17]

2.3.2 Some difficulties

These indications about the processional phases may be unreliable insofar as their exact meaning is not unambiguous. To say that a constellation "never swerves from the East" (as is said of the Pleiades in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2:1:2:3) seems to mean that it contains the spring equinox, implying that it is on the equator, which intersects the horizon due East. But this might seem insufficiently explicit for the modern reader who is used to a precise and separate technical terminology for such matters. But then, the modern reader will have to accept that technical terminology in *Ved*ic days mostly consisted in fixed metaphorical uses of common terms. This is not all that primitive, for the same thing will be found when the etymology of modern technical terms is analyzed, e.g. a *telescope* is a Greek "far-seer", *oxygen* is "acid-producer", a *cylinder* is a "roller". The only difference is that we can use the vocabulary of foreign classical languages to borrow from, while Sanskrit was its own classical reservoir of specialized terminology.

[15] Hermann G. Jacobi: "On the Date of the Ṛgveda" (1894), reproduced in K. C. Verma et al., eds.: *Rtambhara Studies in Indology*, Society for Indic Studies, Ghaziabad 1986, p-91-99.

[16] "We can, therefore, say that about 2000 years have elapsed since the period of Kālidāsa", according to P. V. Holay : "*Ved*ic astronomy, its origin and evolution", in Haribhai Pandya et al.: *Issues in Vedic Astronomy and Astrology*, Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan & Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, p. 109.

[17] The argument for a higher chronology (by about 6 centuries) for the Guptas as well as for the Buddha has been elaborated by K. D. Sethna in *Ancient India in New Light*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi 1989. The established chronology starts from the uncertain assumption that the Sandrokottos/ Chandragupta whom Megasthenes met was the Maurya rather than the Gupta king of that name. This hypothetical synchronism is known as the "sheet-anchor of Indian chronology". In August 1995, a gathering of 43 historians and archaeologists from South-Indian universities (at the initiative of Prof. K. M. Rao, Dr. N. Mahalingam and Dr. S. D. Kulkarni) passed a resolution fixing "the date of the Bharata war at 3139-38 BC" and declaring this date "to be the true sheet anchor of Indian chronology".

Another factor of uncertainty is that the equinox moves very slowly (1° in nearly 71 years), so that any inexactness in the *Ved*ic indications and any ambiguity in the constellations' boundaries makes a difference of centuries. This occasional inexactness might possibly be enough to neutralize the above shift in Kālidāsa's date - but not to account for a shift of millennia (each millennium corresponding to about 14 degrees of arc) needed to move the *Ved*ic age from the pre-Harappan to the post-Harappan period, from 4000 BC as calculated by the astronomers to 1200 BC as surmised by Friedrich Max Müller.

On the other hand, it is encouraging to note that the astronomical evidence is entirely free of contradictions. There would be a real problem if the astronomical indications had put the Upanishads earlier than the *Ṛg-Veda*, or Kālidāsa earlier than the *Brāhmāṇa*, but that is not the case: the astronomical evidence is consistent. Inconsistency would prove the predictable objection of AIT defenders that these astronomical references are but poetical tabulation without any scientific contents. However, the facts are just the opposite. To the extent that there *are* astronomical indications in the *Veda*s, these form a consistent set of data detailing an absolute chronology for *Ved*ic literature in full agreement with the known relative chronology of the different texts of this literature. This way, they completely contradict the hypothesis that the *Veda*s were composed after an invasion in about 1500 BC. Not one of the dozens of astronomical data in *Ved*ic literature confirms the AIT chronology.

2.3.3 Regulus at summer solstice

In the *Śulba Sūtra* appended to Baudhāyana's *Śrauta Sūtra*, mathematical instructions are given for the construction of *Ved*ic altars. One of its remarkable contributions is the theorem usually ascribed to Pythagoras, first for the special case of a square (the form in which it was discovered), then for the general case of the rectangle: "The diagonal of the rectangle produces the combined surface which the length and the breadth produce separately." This and other instances of advanced mathematics presented by Baudhāyana have been shown by the American mathematician A. Seidenberg to be the origin of similar mathematical techniques and 'discoveries' in Greece and Babylonia, some of which have been securely dated to 1700 BC. So, 1700 BC was a *terminus post quem* for Baudhāyana's mathematics, which would reasonably be dated to the later part of the Harappan period which ended in ca. 1900 BC.

However, Seidenberg was told by the Indologists that these *Sūtra*s, or any *Ved*ic text for that matter, were definitely written later than 1700 BC. But mathematical data cannot be manipulated just like that, and Seidenberg remained convinced of his case: "Whatever the difficulty there may be [concerning chronology], it is small in comparison with the difficulty of deriving the *Ved*ic ritual application of the theorem from Babylonia. (The reverse derivation is easy) the application involves geometric algebra, and there is no evidence of geometric algebra from Babylonia. And the geometry of Babylonia is already secondary

whereas in India it is primary."[18] To satisfy the Indologists, he said that the *Śulba Sūtra* had conserved an older tradition, and that it is from this one that the Babylonians had learned their mathematics: "Hence we do not hesitate to place the *Ved*ic (...) rituals, or more exactly, rituals exactly like them, far back of 1700 BC. (...) elements of geometry found in Egypt and Babylonia stem from a ritual system of the kind described in the *Sulvasutra*s."[19] This is then one of those "entities multiplied beyond necessity": a ritual, annex altar, annex mathematical theory, which is exactly like the *Ved*ic ritual, annex altar, annex mathematical theory, only it is not the *Ved*ic ritual but a thousand or so years older. Let us simplify matters and assume that it was Baudhāyana himself who devised his mathematical theories "far back of 1700 BC". Is there a way to find independent confirmation of this suspicion? Yes, there is: the precession of the equinoxes.

In their *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, A. A. MacDonell and A. B. Keith cite the opinion of several philologists about a reference to a solstice in *Māgha* in the *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* (as well as in the *Kauṣitaki Brāhmaṇa* 19:3), to which the *Śulba Sūtra* is an appendix. *Māgha* is the asterism around the star Regulus, but the name is used for an entire month (names of months are typically the name of the most prominent one of the two or three asterisms/*nakṣatra*s which make up that one-twelfth of the ecliptic), spatially equivalent to a zone of about 30° around that star, so any deduction here must take a fair degree of imprecision into account. The 18th- and 19th-century philologists cited disagree about whether a *Māgha* solstice was in 1181 BC or in 1391 BC. The authors themselves consider it "only fair to allow a thousand years for possible errors", and settle for a date between 800 BC and 600 BC, "quite in harmony with the probable date of the *Brāhmāṇa* literature".[20]

However, it is very easy to calculate that Regulus, currently at almost exactly 60° from the solstitial axis, was on that axis about 60×71 years ago, i.e. in the 23rd century BC, Though we must indeed allow for an inexactitude of up to 15°, equivalent to about 1100 years, the *Māgha* solstice described is much more likely to have been in 2200 BC than in 1100 BC, and Keith and MacDonell's 600 BC is quite beyond the pale. It may have taken place even before the 23rd century BC: maybe only the asterism around Regulus had reached the solstitial axis but not yet the star itself. Most likely, then, this reference to a *Māgha* solstice confirms that the *Brāhmāṇa* and *Sūtra* literature including the *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* (annex *Śulba*) dates to the late 3rd millennium BC, at the height of the Harappan civilization. In that case, Seidenberg's reconstruction of the development and transmission of mathematical knowledge and the astronomical references in the literature

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[18] A. Seidenberg: "The ritual origin of geometry", *Archive for History of Exact Sciences*, 1962, p. 488-527, specifically p-515, quoted by N. S. Rajaram and D. Frawley: *Vedic 'Aryans' and the Origins of Civilization*, WH Press, Québec 1995, p-85.

[19] A. Seidenberg: "The ritual origin of geometry", *Archive for History of Exact Sciences*, 1962, p. 515, quoted by N. S. Rajaram and D. Frawley: *Vedic 'Aryans' and the Origins of Civilization*, p. 85.

[20] A. A. MacDonell & A. B. Keith: *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, vol. 1 (1912, reprint by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1982), p. 423-424, entry *Nakṣatra*.

confirm each other in placing Baudhāyana's (post-*Ved*ic!) work in the later part of the Harappan period.

2.3.4 One *Veda* can hide another

At this point, the only defence for the AIT can consist in a wholesale rejection of the astronomical evidence. This can be done in a crude way, e.g. by simply ignoring the astronomical evidence, as is done in most explicitations of the AIT. A slightly subtler approach is to explain it away, as is done by Romila Thapar, who affirms her belief in "the generally accepted chronology that the *Ṛg-Ved*ic hymns were composed over a period extending from about 1500 to 1000 BC". When "references to what have been interpreted as configurations of stars have been used to suggest dates of about 4000 BC for these hymns", she raises the objection that "planetary positions could have been observed in earlier times and such observations been handed down as part of an oral tradition", so that they "do not constitute proof of the chronology of the *Ved*ic hymns".[21]

This would imply that accurate astronomical data were indeed made from the 5th millennium onwards, and that they were preserved for more than two thousand years, an unparalleled feat in oral traditions. If such a feat is not an indication of literacy and of written records, at the least it supposes a mnemotechnical device capable of preserving information orally, and the one that was available then was verse. So, some poems with the memory-aiding devices of verse, rhythm and tone must have been composed when the information was available first-hand, i.e. close to the time of the actual observation, and those hymns would of course be the *Ved*ic hymns themselves. Otherwise, one has to postulate that the *Ved*ic hymns were composed by borrowing the contents of an earlier tradition of verse, composed at the time when the equinox was observed to be in Orion.

In other words, the *Ṛg-Veda* contains literal (though unacknowledged) quotations from another hymns collection composed 2,500 years earlier. This is as good as asserting that Shakespeare's works were not written by Shakespeare, but by someone else whose name was also Shakespeare. However, the point to remember is that even Romila Thapar does not deny that somebody's actual observation of these celestial phenomena was the source of their description in the *Veda*s.

It is not good enough for those who don't like this evidence, to object that they are not convinced by these astronomical indications of high antiquity, on the plea that their meaning might be somewhat unclear to us. it is clear enough and undeniable that the *Ved* ic seers took care to mention certain astronomical positions and phenomena. A convincing refutation would therefore require an alternative but consistent (philogically as well as astronomically sound) interpretation of the existing astronomical indications which brings *Ved*ic literature down to a much later age. But so far, such a reading of those text passages doesn't seem to exist. In no case is there astronomical information which puts the *Veda*s at as late a date as "generally accepted" by Prof. Thapar and others.

[21] Romila Thapar: "The Perennial Aryans", *Seminar*, December 1992.

2.4 ADDITIONAL ASTRONOMICAL INDICATIONS

Apart from the hard evidence, there are a few elements in Hindu astronomical tradition which would not count as evidence all by themselves, but which may gain a new significance when studied in the company of the more solid elements already considered. We will mention four of them: the *Saptarṣi* cycle, the *Ved*ic description of a particular eclipse, cosmic number games in *Ved*ic texts and ritual, and the surprising presence of the Zodiac.

2.4.1 The *Saptarṣi* cycle

A lesser-known Hindu system of time-reckoning is the *Saptarṣi* cycle of 3600 years (possibly based on the 60-year cycle, see (2.4.5 below). At any rate, by the Christian age we find writers who take this concept of a 3600-year cycle literally, and it is hard to either prove or refute that this may have been a much older tradition.

The medieval Kashmiri historian Kalhana claimed that the previous cycle had started in 3076 BC, and the present one in AD 525. J. E. Mitchiner has suggested that the beginning of the *Saptarṣi* reckoning was one more cycle earlier, in 6676 BC: "We may conclude that the older and original version of the Era of the Seven *Ṛsis* commenced with the Seven *Ṛsis* in *Kṛttikā* in 6676 BC, used a total of 28 *Nakṣatra*s, and placed the start of the *Kali-Yuga* in 3102 BC. This version was in use in northern India from at least the 4th century BC, as witnessed by the statements of Greek and Roman writers; it was also the version used by Vṛddha Garga, at around the start of the Christian era."[22] This would roughly coincide with the start of the *Purāṇ*ic dynastic list reported by Greco-Roman authors as starting in 6776 BC.

Indeed, the *Purāṇ*ic king-list as known to Greek visitors of Chandragupta's court in the 4th century BC or to later Greco-Roman India-watchers, started in 6776 BC. Pliny wrote that the Indians date their first king, "Liber Pater" (Roman equivalent of Dionysus), to "6,451 years and 3 months" before Alexander the Great (d. 323 BC), while Arrian puts "Dionysus" as head of the dynastic list at 6,042 + 300 + 120 = 6,462 years before Sandrokottos (Chandragupta), to whom a Greek embassy was sent in 314 BC.[23] Both indications add up to a date, give or take a year, of 6776 BC. This would, according to the implicit chronology of *Purāṇ*ic tradition, be the time of *Manu*'s enthronement, *Manu* being the Āryan patriarch who established his kingdom in North India after having survived the Flood. One of *Manu*'s heirs was *Ilā*, ancestress of *Yayāti*, whose five sons became the patriarchs of the "five peoples" who form the ethnic horizon of the *Veda*s, one of them being Puru; in Puru's tribe, then, one Bharata started the Bharata clan to which most of the *Ved*ic seers belonged.

[22] J.E. Mitchiner: *Traditions of the Seven Rishis*, Motilal B Delhi 1982, p. 163. I thank Prof. Subhash Kak for this reference.

[23] Pliny: *Naturalis Historia* 6:59; Arrian: *Indica* 9:9. I thank Dr. Herman Seldeslachts for checking these references.

It so happens that in the 7th millennium BC, the oceans were still in the process of recovering the ground they lost during the ice Age, when the sea level was for thousands of years nearly a hundred metres below the present level. The importance of the Glaciation, which peaked ca. 16,000 years ago, in the reconstruction of Eurasian migration histories can hardly be overestimated. The Channel between Britain and France, with sea bottom at ca. 40 metres, was a walkway until it was inundated again in ca. 6500 BC, when the sea was already more than halfway back to its normal (or at least its present) level. This means that for centuries before and for some more centuries after that time, the sea level was progressively rising. Since large populations had settled in the coastal areas vacated by the receding sea at the beginning of the Ice Age, the progressive melting of the ice-caps led to the progressive flooding of ever higher-situated population centres, for several millennia until perhaps 5,000 BC.

One can imagine what would happen if today the sea level would rise a mere 10 metres: densely populated countries like the Netherlands and Bangladesh would get largely submerged, along with major cities like New York and Mumbai, and at least a quarter of the world population would have to move. But that was, for several millennia, the human condition: one after another, low-lying villages had to be abandoned to the rising sea. It must have seemed like a law of nature to them that the sea was forever rising, forcing men to seek higher habitats. And this process was probably continuous only when looked at from a distance, the reality being more like periods of stable sea levels followed by sudden jumps, catastrophes when considered on the scale of a human lifetime. Most probably, that is the origin of the Flood story.[24] The *Purāṇa*s describe *Manu* as the leader of mankind after the Flood, and if we apply a realistic average length to the rulerships of the kings mentioned in the *Purāṇ*ic dynastic lists, *Manu* may have lived in the 7th millennium BC, the time of the rising waters, warranting the suspicion that the Flood story is related to historical events at the end of the Ice Age.

The myth of Atlantis and other submerged continents probably has a similar origin. The Tamils have a tradition of a submerged land to India's south, of which the Maldives and Sri Lanka are remaining hilltops: *Kumārīkhaṇḍam* or, in the parlance of the Madras-based Theosophical Society, *Lemuria*. The city in which their poets' academy or *Sangam* (recorded in the early Christian era, but claimed to be ten thousand years old) was established, was said to have been moved thrice because of the rising waters. Though it is hard to see how poets working at the turn of the Christian era could have a memory of events five millennia older, one cannot dismiss as pure fable a story which tallies neatly with the

[24]The worst case was probably the Black Sea, which was a lake during the Ice Age, until some time in the 7th millennium BC. When rising waters in the Mediterranean inundated the dry Bosporus straits and plunged into the Black Sea, the latter rose dramatically, forcing coast-dwellers to flee as much as a mile a day for months on end. Many of them didn't survive, and entire states (or whatever political units were in existence) were drowned. The fact that the Biblical Flood story has Noah land on Mount Ararat, not far from the Black Sea, may be due (apart from the presence of a boat-like rock formation there) to the memory of the Black Sea flood drama. In most parts of the world, the flooding of coastal villages must have been more gradual.

known geological facts of the rising sea level at the end of the Ice Age.

And if such memory was possible, the existence of a system of time-reckoning going back that far is not impossible either. But we must admit that for the time being, this is merely "not impossible". However, even if we let the *Saptarṣi* cycle start only in 3076 BC, unrelated to *Manu* and the Flood, this is still hard to reconcile with the theory of an Āryan invasion in the 2nd millennium BC.

2.4.2 A remarkable eclipse

For another chronological marker, *Ṛg-Veda* 5:40:5-9 describes a solar eclipse. From the description, one can deduce a number of conditions determining the times at which it could have taken place: it was at that site a central, non-total eclipse, which took place in the afternoon on the Kurukṣhetra meridian, on a given day after the summer solstice, at least in the reading of P. C. Sengupta. Only one date satisfies all conditions, which he calculated as 26 July 3928 BC.[25] We have to add, however, that this calculation stands or falls with the accuracy of the unusual translation of the word *brahma* as "solstice". This reading is supported by later scriptural references to the same event, *Śānkhāyana Araṇyaka* 1:2,18 and *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* 2:404-410. N. S. Rajaram has identified an even more explicit use of *brahma* in the sense of "solstice": in *Ṛg-Veda* 10:85:35, where *brahma* is associated with the division of the solar cycle in two halves.[26]

Moreover, the astronomical interpretation (e.g. by B. G. Tilak) of *Ṛg-Veda* 10:61:5-8, where *brahma* is the equinox and the fruit of the union between a divine father and daughter, i.e. the two adjoining constellations *Mṛgaśira*/Orion and *Rohiṇī*/Aldebaran, if not more abstractly the intersection of two related celestial circles, may be cited in support: *equinox* is not the same as *solstice*, but it is at least one of the cardinal directions, a purely astronomical rather than a religious concept; the common meaning of *brahma* would then be "cardinal direction". The division of the ecliptic in 4 parts of 90° by the solstice axis and the equinox axis is already obliquely referred to in *Ṛg-Veda* 1:155:6, so the concept of "cardinal direction" was certainly understood. Still, this construction remains sufficiently strange to be a reasonable ground for skepticism. On the other hand, it is up to the skeptics to come up with a convincing alternative translation which fits the context.

2.4.3 Cosmic data in *Ved*ic ritual

A different type of astronomical evidence, not to fix a precise date but to give an idea of the scientific spirit of the *Ved*ic Āryans, is the interpretation of numerical facts about the *Veda*

[25] P. C. Sengupta: "The solar eclipse in the Rgveda and the Date of Atri", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal Letters*, 1941/7, p. 92-113, also included in his *Ancient Indian Chronology*, Calcutta 1947; discussed in K. V. Sarma: "A Solar Eclipse Recorded in the Ṛgveda", in Haribhai Pandya et al., eds.: *Issues in Vedic Astronomy and Astrology*, Motilal Banarsidass. Delhi 1992, p. 217-224.

[26] N. S. Rajaram (with D. Frawley): *Vedic 'Aryans' and the Origins of Civilization*, WH Press, Québec 1995, p. 106.

s as implicit references to astronomical data. If this seems far-fetched, it should be borne in mind that ancient mythology and religion were primarily concerned with the visible heaven-dwellers, i.e. the heavenly bodies. Many myths are nothing but anthropomorphic narrations of celestial phenomena such as eclipses, solstices and equinoxes, the angular relations between the orbiting planets (e.g. the regular overtaking of the planets by the fast-moving moon, therefore imagined by the Greeks as a huntress, Artemis), the analogy between the twelve-month solar cycle and the twelve-year Jupiter cycle, and even the precession.[27]

Apart from this figurative representation, there is also a numerical representation of astronomical data in ancient traditions. Thus the Bible, written by a satellite culture of the astronomically astute Babylonians, used the device of enciphering astronomical data in all kinds of contingent numerical aspects of the narrative, e.g. the ages of the antediluvian patriarchs in *Genesis* turn out to be equal to the sums of the planets' synodic cycles (period from one conjunction with the sun till the next): *Lamech* dies at age 777 = 399 (number of days in Jupiter's synodic cycle) + 378 (Saturn's); *Mahalalel* at 895 = 116 + 779 (Mercury + Mars); *Yared* at 962 = 584 + 378 (Venus + Saturn). Similarly, the symbolism of 12 and 13, referring to the lunar months in a year, is omnipresent in the Bible: 12 sons of Jacob plus 1 daughter; 12 tribes of Israel with a territory plus the 1 priestly tribe of Levi; 12 regular apostles of Jesus plus the one substitute for the traitor Judas, Matthias; the "thirteen-petalled rose" as Talmudic symbol of the Torah.

In the past decades, scientists and orthodox religionists have often made fun of attempts to connect religion with science, as in Fritjof Capra's *Tao of Physics* and numerous other books. Yet, in ancient religious texts we already see this attempt of religious thinkers to keep up with the latest in science, as outlined above for astronomy. In his Gospel, John takes the trouble of counting the fish caught by the apostle-fishermen in their nets: 153. Number theory was fairly advanced among the Pythagoreans, and some of its remarkable findings were well-known among the educated in the Hellenistic world. They were aware of the unique property of 153: it is equal to the sum of the third powers of its own constituent figures: 1 + 125 + 27. Somehow, John assumed that the religious depth of his text would gain from including some allusions to mathematics. In ancient Pagan civilizations, this fusion of religion and proto-science was the done thing; it was usually the priests who used their leisure to develop scientific knowledge, for they were not troubled by the conflict between faith and religion which would characterize the Christian and Islamic Middle Ages.

So in the *Veda*s as well, we find astronomical data enciphered in all kinds of ways. Thus, the Hindus' most sacred number 108 is, with an inaccuracy of only 1%, the distance earth-sun expressed in solar diameters (i.e. the radius of the earth's orbit divided by the sun's diameter), as well as the distance earth-moon expressed in lunar diameters. Subhash

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[27] This position is argued powerfully in the classic study by Giorgio de Santillana & Hertha von Dechend: *Hamlet's Mill*, David R. Godine, Boston 1992 (1969); in Norman Davidson: *Astronomy and the Imagination*, Routledge & Kegan, London 1986 (1985); and in Thomas D. Worthen: *The Myth of Replacement. Stars, Gods and Order in the Universe*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson 1991.

Kak has checked if such numerical combinations as just cited from Genesis also appear in the *Veda*s.[28] They do, though they are often quite complicated and only obvious to someone well-versed in the idiosyncrasies of the multiple *Ved*ic calendar systems. An easy example is: the number of hymns in books 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the *Ṛg-Veda* adds up to 354, the number of days in the Lunar year consisting of 12 moon cycles. Similarly, the total number of hymns in books 4, 5, 6 and 7 is 324, the number of days in the so-called *Nakṣatra* year, being the duration of the sun's stay in 24 of the 27 lunar mansions. Coincidence?

According to Kak: "By adding the hymn counts of the ten books of the Rig-*Veda* in different combinations, we obtain numbers that are factors of the sidereal periods and the five synodic periods (...) The probability of this happening is about one in a million. Hence whoever arranged the Rig-*Veda* encoded into it not only obvious numbers like the lunar year but also hidden numbers of great astronomical significance."[29]

This choice of numbers in a cosmically meaningful way is also present in the construction of the *Ved*ic altar, such as the numbers of bricks in each layer being equal to the number of days in given planetary cycles.[30] It involves fairly complicated arithmetic, and shows the kind of concern which the *Ved*ic seers had for the harmony between their own religious practices and the astronomical cycles. That mentality led logically to painstakingly accurate observations and calculations, and thereby supports the suspicion of reliability of the internal *Ved*ic astro-chronology.

2.4.4 The Zodiac

To conclude this brief acquaintance with *Ved*ic astronomy, we want to draw attention to the possible presence in the *Ṛg-Veda* of a momentous cultural artifact, the origin of which is usually situated in Babylonia in about 600 BC: the twelve-sign Zodiac. In *Ṛg-Veda* 1:164:11, the sun wheel in heaven is said to have 12 spokes, and to be subdivided into 360 pairs of "sons": the days (consisting of day and night), rounded off to an arithmetically manageable number, also the basis of the "Babylonian" division of the circle in 360°. The division in 12 already suggests the Zodiac, and we also find, in the footsteps of N.R. Waradpande, that a number of the Zodiacal constellations/*rāśi*s (classically conceived as combinations of 2 or 3 successive Lunar mansions or *nakṣatra*s of 13°20′ each) are mentioned: *Siṃha*/Leo (5:83:3 and 9:89:3), *Kanyā*/Virgo (6:49:7), *Mithuna*/Gemini (3:39.3), and *Vṛṣabha*/Taurus (6:47:5 and 8:93:1).[31]

Here again, the precession has located them where we would expect them in about 4000 BC. The *Vṛṣabha rāśi* is said to have stabilised the heavens with a mighty prop, apparently a reference to the Taurus equinox in the 4$^{\text{th}}$ millennium BC; the same verse

[28] S. Kak: *Astronomical Code of the Rig-Veda*, Ch.5-6.

[29] Georg Feuerstein, Subhash Kak and David Frawley: *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization*, Quest Books, Wheaton IL 1995, p. 208.

[30] Kak, *Astronomical Code*, Ch.4.

[31] Argued in N. R. Waradpande: *New Light on the Date of the Ṛgveda*, Sanskrit Bhasha Pracharini Sabha, Nagpur 1994, p. 13-24.

links the Taurus month with its opposite, *Śukra/Jyeṣṭha* (coinciding with Scorpio, which contained the autumnal equinox), confirming it least that *Vṛṣabha*, "bull", is used here in an astronomical-calendrical sense. That the seasons are linked with the constellation which is "heliacally rising" (i.e. rising just before dawn) is perhaps indicated by *Ṛg-Veda* 8:93:1: "*Sūrya*, thou mountest up to meet the *vṛṣabha*", the sun rises as if to meet the constellation which is just above the horizon.

We are aware that, like the Chinese, the Hindus link the season to the lunar constellation / *nakṣatra* in opposition, i.e. the one which rises at sunset and may contain the full moon. This approach, if applied to modern astrology, would mean that those who think they are Taurus (sun in Taurus) would become its opposite, Scorpio (sun opposite Scorpio, full moon in Scorpio). By contrast, the Babylonians linked the seasons to the solar constellation/*rāśi* in heliacal rising. If that method were used in modern astrology, those who consider themselves Taurus (sun in Taurus) would find themselves to be Aries (last constellation to rise before the sun-in-Taurus rises).[32] However, Waradpande's discovery seems to imply that the Hindus too used the constellation (at least the *rāśi*, not the *nakṣatra*) in heliacal rising, like the Babylonians did.

If in *Ṛg-Ved*ic astronomy the twelve constellations are not linked to the time of the year when they are heliacally rising, but to the time when they are "inhabited" by the sun (as is the practice in modern Hindu astrology), then the whole story would move up at least a thousand and possibly two thousand years, putting the *Ṛg-Veda* in about 2000 BC. This is because the sun is in mid-Taurus a month before Taurus's heliacal rising, or about 3° of the cycle, a distance covered by the precession of the equinox in about two thousand years. But it is unlikely that they considered the constellation containing the sun rather than the constellation heliacally rising, as astronomy was based on actual observation more than on calculation, and consequently required that the constellation be visible.[33] The constellation temporarily inhabited by the sun is invisible, and that is why the ancients made do with the constellation rising before the one in which the sun is located (heliacal rising), or the one rising when the sun sets, in practice the one inhabited by the full moon (opposition).

The difference between the sun, which obscures the constellation it inhabits, and the moon, which is seen against the background of the constellation it inhabits, explains why a moon-based system uses moon-in-constellation or, via full-moon-in-constellation, sun-in-opposition (the full moon being by definition opposite to the sun); while a sun-based system

[32]This remains true whether one uses the Tropical (abstract, solstice/ equinox-based) or the Sidereal (visible, constellation-based) Zodiac, a question which is not really relevant here. The *Ved*ic Zodiac was sidereal, more based on observation than on calculation; the tropical Zodiac apparently dates from the time when sidereal and tropical signs coincided (around the turn of the Christian era), i.e. when the constellation of Aries filled the 30° sector following the spring equinox in the sun-earth cycle, a tropical sector known since then as Aries regardless of the position of the constellation Aries.

[33]Other possible *Ved*ic indications that the seers used the concept of heliacal rising, are the descriptions of the last stars fading before the almost-rising sun: *Ṛg-Veda* 1:50:2, and metaphorically *Ṛg-Veda* 7:36:1, 7:81:2, 9:69:4.

had to make do with a derivative relation between sun and constellation, typically the constellation's heliacal rising. The implication is that India originally had both systems: a Lunar 27-part Zodiac (*nakṣatra*s) using the opposition, exactly like in China (and its derived system of 12 months, based on combinations of 2 or 3 *nakṣatra*s and still in use); and a Solar 12-part Zodiac (*rāśi*s) using the heliacal rising, exactly like in Babylonia.

The *Mithuna rāśi*/Gemini is said to destroy darkness and to be basis (*budhna*) of heat (*tapas*) (*Ṛg-Veda* 3:39:3). During Gemini's heliacal rising in 4000 BC, the sun was in Cancer, then coinciding with our month of May, in northern India the first month of summer (May-June), a season of drought and extreme heat. During Leo's heliacal rising, around summer solstice in 4000 BC, the rainy season began. Therefore, verse 5:83:3 says: "Like the charioteer driving the horse by the whip, he releases the messengers of shower. From afar the roars of the *siṃha* declare that the rain-god is making the sky showering." It could not be clearer.

Leo is followed by Virgo, indicating the second half of the rainy season, when the water level in the rivers rises dramatically: in verse 6:49:7, she is called "the purifier *Kanyā* with *Citrā* as her life", and equated with the river Saraswatī, the "waterstream-full". At this point I must disagree with Waradpande, who takes Saraswatī, "waterstream-full," in its literal meaning, when obviously it is used as the name of the *Ved*ic river. But at least the reference - the reference to *Citrā*, the asterism Spica, the most conspicuous part of the constellation Virgo, dispels any lingering doubt that in this context, *Kanyā*/Virgo does indeed mean the sixth constellation of the Zodiac.

If this is correct, it means that the Zodiac is as old as the oldest *Veda*, and that the Zodiac itself helps to date the *Veda*s to the age when Leo and Virgo were connected with the rainy season. Even if we consider sun-in-Virgo rather than Virgo's heliacal rising, this would still indicate the centuries around 2000 BC, well before the 1500 BC taught in our universities as the earliest possible date of the *Ṛg-Veda*. Either way, it also upsets the current assumption that the Zodiac was invented in Babylon in the last millennium BC.

2.4.5 India as the metropolis

Off-hand, while trying to give a solid astronomical basis to *Ved*ic chronology, we discover a case of cultural transmission in which India is no longer a rather late receiver but, on the contrary, the extremely ancient source. Indeed, both the solar and the lunar Zodiac may well originate in India. If the *Ṛg-Veda* does refer to a 12-part Zodiac, it precedes the Babylonian Zodiac by centuries even in the lowest AIT-based chronology for the *Veda*s. As for China: in his famous *Science and Civilization in China*, Joseph Needham notes, again by using the precession as a time marker, that the Chinese 27-part Zodiac dates back to the 24th century BC.[34] He recognizes a common origin with the Hindu *nakṣatra* Zodiac, and then surmises that the Hindus had it from China, on the assumption that the *Ved* ic references to the *nakṣatra*s are from 1500 BC at the earliest. But that assumption, a

[34] Joseph Needham: *Science and Civilization in China*, part 1, ch-20: "Astronomy", p. 253-254.

by-product of the AIT, is seriously undermined by all the data we have been considering here.

Another indication for Indian influence on Chinese astronomy is the 60-year century, known in *Ved*ic literature (the *Bṛhaspati* cycle) and still commonly used in the Chinese calendar. The 6th-century astronomer Āryabhaṭa reports that he was 23 when the 60th cycle ended, implying that the system was set rolling in 3102 BC. In China, the system was adopted a few centuries later: according to Chinese tradition, it started with the enthronement of the legendary Yellow Emperor in 2697 BC.

A stellar myth which was apparently transmitted from India to China is the notion that after death, the souls go to the Scorpio-Sagittarius region of the sky (specifically Phi Sagitarii), where the autumnal equinox was located in the 4th millennium BC. There, they were to be judged by Yama or a similar god of the dead.

The influence of Indian astronomy on both China and Babylonia confirms the *Ved*ic-Harappan civilization's status as the world metropolis in the 4th-3rd millennium BC. In the official cults in imperial China and in Babylon, stellar science, stellar symbolism and stellar worship were central. But the same central place had already been accorded to astronomy in the *Veda*s, as we have seen here (if only fragmentarily, for numerous *Ved*ic motifs not discussed here are also related to astronomy, e.g. the *twelve āditya*s or divine children of the sun, *Prajāpati* as personification of the year cycle, etc.); and also in the culture and religion of the Indus-Saraswatī civilization, as Asko Parpola and others have shown.[35]

Remark that Parpola often tries to make sense of Harappan data by referring to *Ved*ic data, on the AIT-based assumption that the Āryan invaders integrated Harappan astronomy and religion.[36] This is again a case of multiplying entities without necessity: instead of saying that there are two cultures which happen to share some astro-religious lore, we might assume that these two cultures are one, until proof of the contrary. Parpola's arguments for a Harappan origin of *Ved*ic and Hindu cultural items, e.g. of astronomy-based nomenclature (names like *Kṛttikā*, "of the Pleiades"), are just as much arguments for an identity of *Ved*ic and Harappan.[37] The point to remember is that even Parpola, often cited as an argument of authority by Indian defenders of the AIT, fully acknowledges the continuity between *Ved*ic and Harappan culture. The common emphasis on astronomy in both *Ved*ic and Harappan sources is certainly an indication of their close kinship if not their identity.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The astronomical lore in *Ved*ic literature provides elements of an absolute chronology in a consistent way. For what it is worth, this corpus of astronomical indications suggests

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[36] 36
[37] 37

that the *Ṛg-Veda* was completed in the 4th millennium AD, that the core text of the *Mahābhārata* was composed at the end of that millennium, and that the *Brāhmāṇa*s and *Sūtra*s are products of the high Harappan period towards the end of the 3rd millennium BC. This corpus of evidence is hard to reconcile with the AIT, and has been standing as a growing challenge to the AIT defenders for two centuries.

Chapter 3

Linguistic Aspects of the IE Urheimat Question

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 Evidence sweeping everything before it

When evidence from archaeology and Sanskrit text studies seems to contradict the theory of the entry of the Indo-Āryan branch of the Indo-European (IE) language family in India through the so-called "Āryan Invasion" (Āryan Invasion Theory, AIT), we are usually reassured that "there is of course the linguistic evidence" for this invasion, or at least for the non-Indian origin of the IE family.

Thus, F. E. Pargiter had shown how the *Purāṇa*s locate Āryan origins in the Gaṅgā basin and found "the earliest connexion of the *Veda*s to be with the eastern region and not with the Panjab" [1], but then he allowed the unnamed linguistic evidence to overrule his own findings: "We know from the evidence of language that the Āryans entered India very early." [2] (His solution is to relocate the point of entry of the Āryans from the western Khyber pass to the eastern Himālaya: Kāthmandu or thereabouts.)

At the same time, the linguists themselves are often quite aware that the AIT is just a successful theory, not a proven fact. Those who try to take the scientific pretences of their discipline seriously, are not all that over-confident about the AIT. Many are willing to be modest and concede that so far it has merely been the most successful hypothesis. In fact, when quizzing linguists about the AIT, I came away with the impression that they too are not very sure of their case. By now, most of them have been trained entirely within the AIT framework, which was taken for granted and consequently not sought to be proven anymore. One of them told me that he had never bothered about a linguistic justification for the

[1] F. E. Pargiter: *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1962, p. 302.
[2] *ibid.* p. 1

AIT framework, because there was, after all, "the well-known archaeological evidence"!

But for the rest, "the linguistic evidence" is still the magic mantra to silence all doubts about the AIT. It is time that we take a look for ourselves at this fabled linguistic evidence.

3.1.2 Down with the linguistic evidence

A common reaction among Indians against this state of affairs is to dismiss linguistics altogether, calling it a "pseudo-science". Thus, Prof. N. S. Rajaram describes 19th-century comparative and historical linguistics, which generated the Āryan Invasion Theory (AIT), as "a scholarly discipline that had none of the checks and balances of a real science" [3], in which "a conjecture is turned into a hypothesis to be later treated as a fact in support of a new theory". [4]

Likewise, N. R. Waradpande questions the very existence of an Indo-European language family and rejects the genetic kinship model, arguing very briefly that similarities between Greek and Sanskrit must be due to very early borrowing. [5] He argues that "the linguists have not been able to establish that the similarities in the Āryan or Indo-European languages are genetic, i.e. due to their having a common ancestry". He alleges that "the view that the South-Indian languages have an origin different from that of the North-Indian languages is based on irresponsible, ignorant and motivated utterances of a missionary". [6] The "missionary" in question is the 19th century prioneer of Dravidology, Bishop Robert Caldwell.

This rejection of linguistics by critics of the AIT creates the impression that their own pet theory, which makes the Āryans into natives of India rather than invaders, is not resistant to the test of linguistics. However, the fact that people fail to challenge the linguistic evidence, preferring simply to excommunicate it from the debate, does not by itself validate this body of evidence. Prof. Rajaram's remark that hypotheses are treated by scholars as facts, as arguments capable of overruling other hypotheses, is definitely valid for much of the humanities, including linguistics. To be sure, it doesn't follow that linguistics is a pseudo-science, merely that linguists in their reasoning have often fallen short of the scientific standard.

[3] N. S. Rajaram: *The Politics of History*, Voice of India, Delhi 1995, p. 144.

[4] *ibid.* p. 217.

[5] N. R. Waradpande: *The Aryan Invasion, a Myth*, Babasaheb Apte Smarak Samiti, Nagpur 1989, p. 19-21.

[6] N.R. Waradpande: "Fact and fiction about the Aryans", in S. B. Deo & Suryanath Kamath: *The Aryan Problem*, Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalana Samiti, Pune 1993, p. 14-15.

3.2 ORIGIN OF THE LINGUISTIC ARGUMENT

3.2.1 Linguistic and geographical distance from the origins

In the 18th century, when comparative IE linguistics started, the majority opinion was that the original homeland (or *Urheimat*) of the IE language family had to be India. This had an ideological reason, viz. that Enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire were eager to replace Biblical tradition with a more distant Oriental source of inspiration for European culture.[7] China was a popular candidate, but India had the advantage of being linguistically and even racially more akin to Europe; making it the homeland of the European languages or even of the European peoples, would be helpful in the dethronement of Biblical authority, but by no means far-fetched.

The ancient Indian language, Sanskrit, was apparently the closest to the hypothetical Proto-Indo-European (PIE) language from which all existing members of the language family descended. It had all the grammatical categories of Latin and Greek in the most complete form, plus a few more., e.g. three numbers including a dualis in declension and conjugation, and all eight declension cases. Apparently, Sanskrit was very close to if not identical with PIE, and this was taken to support the case for India as the Urheimat.

In reality, there is no necessary relation between the linguistic antiquity of a language and its proximity to the Urheimat. Thus, among the North-Germanic languages, the one closest to Proto-North-Germanic is Icelandic, yet Iceland was most definitely not its Urheimat. The relative antiquity of Sanskrit vis-à-vis PIE does not determine its proximity to the Urheimat. Conversely, the subsequent dethronement of Sanskrit and the progressive desanskritization of reconstructed PIE do not imply a geographical remoteness of India from the Urheimat. Yet, this mistaken inference has been quite common, though more often silent and implicit than explicit.

3.2.2 Kentum/Satem

The first major element creating a distance between PIE and Sanskrit was the *kentum/satem* divide. It was assumed, in my view correctly (but denied by Indian scholars like Satya Swarup Misra)[8], that palatalization is a one-way process transforming velars (k, g) into palatals (c, j) but never the reverse; so that the velar or "kentum" (Latin for "hundred", from PIE *kmtom) forms had to be the original and the palatal or "satem" (*Avesta*n for "hundred") forms the evolved variants.

However, it would be erroneous to infer from this that the kentum area, i.e. Western

[7] The classic reference for the ideological factors in the development of the Indo-European theory is Léon Poliakov: *The Aryan Myth*, London 1974.

[8] Satya Swarup Misra: *The Aryan Problem* (Delhi 1992), p. 47. This palatalization is known in numerous languages, e.g. Chinese (Yangzi-kiang > Yangzi-jiang), the Bantu language Chiluba (cfr. Ki-konko, Ki-swahili, but Chi-luba), Arabic (Gabriel > Jibrīl), English (kirk> church), the Romance languages, Swedish etc.

and Southern Europe, was the homeland. On the contrary, it is altogether more likely that the Urheimat was in satem territory. The alternative from the angle of an Indian Urheimat theory (IUT) would be that India had originally had the kentum form, that the dialects which first emigrated (Hittite, Italo-Celtic, Germanic, Tokharic) retained the kentum form and took it to the geographical borderlands of the IE expanse (Europe, Anatolia, China), while the dialects which emigrated later (Baltic, Thracian, Phrygian) were at a halfway stage and the last-emigrated dialects (Slavic, Armenian, Iranian) plus the staybehind Indo-Āryan languages had adopted the satem form. This would satisfy the claim of the so-called Lateral Theory that the most conservative forms are to be found at the outskirts rather than in the metropolis.

Moreover, Indian scholars have pointed out that the discovery of a small and extinct kentum language inside India (Proto-Bangani, with *koto* as its word for "hundred"), surviving as a sizable substratum in the Himālayan language Bangani, tends to support the hypothesis that the older kentum form was originally present in India as well.[9] This discovery had been made by the German linguist Claus Peter Zoller, who does not explain it through an Indian Urheimat Theory but as a left-over of a pre-*Ved*ic Indo-European immigration into India.[10] He claims that the local people have a tradition of their immigration from Afghanistan.

However, in a recent survey among Bangani speakers, George van Driem (Netherlands) and Suhnu Ram Sharma have found the hypothesis of a kentum Proto-Bangani to be erroneous: the supposed kentum words turned out to be misreadings of quite ordinary modern Bangani words or phrases.[11] Then again, an even more recent survey on the spot by Anvita Abbi (Jawaharlal Nehru University) and her students has almost entirely confirmed Zoller's list of kentum substratum words in Bangani.[12] As the trite phrase goes: this calls for more research.

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[9] E.g. Shrikant Talageri: *The Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi 1993, p. 70.

[10] The discovery of kentum elements in Proto-Bangani was announced to the world by Claus Peter Zoller at the 7th World Sanskrit Conference, Leiden 1987, in his paper: "On the vestiges of an old Kentum language in Garhwal (Indian Himālayas)", and elaborated further in his articles: "Bericht über besondere Archaismen im Bangani, einer Western Pahari-Sprache", *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, 1988, p. 173-200, and: "Bericht über grammatische Archaismen im Bangani", ibid., 1989, p-159-218.

[11] George van Driem and Suhnu Ram Sharma: "In search of Kentum Indo-Europeans in the Himālayas", *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 1996, p. 107-146. In terms of serenity and academic factuality, the language they use to qualify Zoller's work leaves much to be desired, a fact which is sure to be used by the Indocentric school to prove its point that the AIT school is just biased. Likewise, the refusal by the *Indogermanische Forschungen* editor to publish Zoller's reply is a telling instance of the mentality among defenders of the Āryan invasion status quo.

[12] Anvita Abbi: "Debate on archaism of some select Bangani words", http://www.personal.umich.edu/pehook/bangani.abbi2.html ,1998.

3.2.3 Sanskrit and PIE vowels

The second element in the progressive separation of Sanskrit from PIE was the impression that the [a/e/o] differentiation in Latin and Greek was original, and that their reduction to [a] in Sanskrit was a subsequent development (as in Greek *genos* corresponding to Sanskrit *jana*). Satya Swarup Misra argues that it may just as well have been the other way around, and unlike the palatalization process, this vowel shift is indeed possible in either direction.[13] Mishra cites examples from the Gypsy language, but we need look no farther than English, where [a], still preserved in "bar", has practically become [e] in "back" and "bake", and [o] in "ball".

There are, however, excellent reasons to stick to the conventional view that the [a/e/o] distinctness is original and their coalescence into [a] a later development. Firstly, the reduction to [a) is typical of just one branch, viz. Indo-lranian, whereas a differentiation starting from [a] would have been a change uniformly affecting all the branches except one, which is less probable. Secondly, the different treatment of the velar consonants in reduplicated Sanskrit verb forms like *jagāma* or *cakāra* suggests a difference in subsequent vowel, with only the first vowel having a palatalizing impact on the preceding velar: *jegāma* < *gegāma*, *cekāra* < *kekāra*.

So, there is no reason to reject the conventional view that Greek vowels are closer to the PIE original than the Sanskrit vowels are. But here again, we also see no reason to make geographical deductions from this. India may as well have been the homeland of Proto-Greek, which left before the shift from [a/e/o] to [a] took place.

3.2.4 Indo-Hittite

A third element which increased the distance between reconstructed PIE and Sanskrit dramatically was the discovery of Hittite. Though Hittite displayed a very large intake of lexical and other elements from non-IE languages, some of its features were deemed to be older than their Sanskrit counterparts, e.g. the Hittite *genus commune* as opposed to Sanskrit's contrast between masculine and feminine genders, or the much-discussed laryngeal consonants, absent in Sanskrit as in all other IE languages.

It is by no means universally accepted that these features of Hittite are indeed PIE. Thus, the erosion of grammatical gender is a common phenomenon in IE languages, especially those suddenly exposed to an overdose of foreign influence, notably Persian and English. So, it is arguable that Hittite underwent the same development when it had to absorb large doses of Hattic or other pre-IE influence. In the past, the laryngeals have been explained by competent scholars (the last one probably being Heinz Kronasser, d. 1967) as being due to South-Caucasian or Semitic influence.

In any case, those who reject the laryngeal theory have definitely been marginalized. But for our purposes there is no need to align ourselves with these dissident opinions. Even

[13] Satya Swarup Misra: *The Aryan Problem*, p. 80-87, p. 89.

if we go with the dominant opinion and accept these elements as PIE, that is still no reason why the Urheimat should be in the historical location of Hittite or at least outside India. As the first emigrant dialect, Hittite could have taken from India some linguistic features (genus commune, laryngeals) which were about to disappear in the dialects emigrating only later or staying behind.

3.3 DIRECT GEOGRAPHICAL CLUES

3.3.1 Geographical asymmetry in expansion

In the 19th century, as India went out of favour, a number of European countries started competing for the honour of being the Urheimat. Ukraine and Russia gained the upper hand with the archaeological discovery of the so-called Kurgan culture, dated to the 5th to 3rd millennium, and apparently the source of migrations into central and western Europe. This area also fell neatly in the middle of the expansion area of IE, a fact which some took as an element in support of the Kurgan culture's Urheimat claim. However, unless IE differs in this respect from other languages and language families, this central location argues more against than in favour of the Kurgan culture's Urheimat claim. Indeed, we find very few examples of languages expanding symmetrically: Chinese spread from the Yellow River basin southward, Russian from Ukraine eastward, Arabic from Arabia northwestward. There is consequently nothing against an IE migration starting from India and continuing almost exclusively in a westward direction.

The reason for this observed tendency to asymmetry is that the two opposite directions from a given region are only symmetrical in a geometrical sense: climatologically, economically and demographically, the two are usually very different, e.g. the region north of the Yellow River is much less fertile and hospitable than the regions to its south. From the viewpoint of Kurgan culture emigrants, there was hardly a symmetry between the European West and the Indian Southeast: India was densely inhabited, technologically advanced and politically organized, Europe much less so. Europe could be overrun and culturally revolutionized by immigrants, while in India even large groups of immigrants were bound to be assimilated by the established civilization.

India satisfied the conditions for making the spectacular expansion of IE possible: like Europe in the colonial period, it had a demographic surplus and a technological edge over its neighbours. Food crises and political conflicts must have led to emigrations which were small by Indian standards but sizable for the less populated countries to India's northwest. Since these emigrants, increasingly mingled with the populations they encountered along the way, retained their technological edge vis-à-vis every next population to its west (esp. in the use of horse and chariot), the expansion in western direction continued until the Atlantic Ocean stopped it. Processes of elite dominance led to the linguistic assimilation of ever more westerly populations.

It is easy to see how and why the tendency to asymmetric expansion in the case of

other languages also applies to India as the Urheimat of IE. On the road to the northwest, every next region was useful for the Indo-Europeans in terms of their established lifestyle and ways of food production. The mountainous regions to the north and west of India were much less interesting, as were the mountainous areas in the Indian interior. In India, Āryan expansion was long confined to the riverine plains with economic conditions similar to those in the middle basin of the Indus, Saraswatī and Gaṅgā rivers; the Vindhya and Himālaya mountains formed a natural frontier (the Vindhya mountains were first bypassed by sea, with landings on the Malabar coast). To the northwest, by contrast, after crossing the mountains of Afghanistan, emigrants could move from one riverine plain into the next: Oxus and Jaxartes, Wolga, Dniepr, Dniestr, Don, Danube, and into the European plain stretching from Poland to Holland. Only in the south and southwest of Europe, a more complex geography and a denser and more advanced native population slowed IE expansion down, and a number of pre-IE languages survived there into the Roman period, Basque even till today.

3.3.2 Geographical distribution

Another aspect of geographical distribution is the allocation of larger and smaller stretches of territory to the different branches of the IE family. We find the Iranian (covering the whole of Central Asia before 1000 AD) and Indo-Āryan branches each covering a territory as large as all the European branches (at least in the pre-colonial era) combined. We also find the Indo-Āryan branch by itself having, from antiquity till today, more speakers on the Eurasian continent (now nearing 900 million) than all other branches combined. This state of affairs could help us to see the Indo-Āryan branch as the centre and the other branches as wayward satellites; but so far, philologists have made exactly the opposite inference. It is said that this is the typical contrast between a homeland and its colony: a fragmented homeland where languages have small territories, and a large but linguistically more homogeneous colony (cfr. English, which shares its little home island with some Celtic languages, but has much larger stretches of land in North America and Australia all to itself, and with less dialect variation than in Britain; or cfr. Spanish, likewise).

It is also argued that Indo-Āryan must be a late-comer to India, for otherwise it would have been divided by now in several subfamilies as distinct from each other as, say, Celtic from Slavic. To this, we must remark first of all that the linguistic unity of Indo-Āryan should not be exaggerated. Native speakers of Indo-Āryan languages tell me that the difference between Bengali and Sindhi is bigger than that between, say, any two of the Romance languages. Further, to the extent that Indo-Āryan has preserved its unity, this may be attributed to the following factors, which have played to a larger extent and for longer periods in India than in Europe: a geographical unity from Sindh to Bengal (a continuous riverine plain) facilitating interaction between the regions, unlike the much more fragmented geography of Europe; long-time inclusion in common political units (e.g. Maurya, Gupta and Moghul empires); and continuous inclusion in a common cultural space

with the common stabilizing influence of Sanskrit.

From the viewpoint of an Indian Urheimat hypothesis, the most important factor explaining the high fragmentation of IE in Europe as compared to its relative homogeneity in North India is the way in which an emigration from India to Europe must be imagined. Tribes left India and mixed with the non-IE-speaking tribes of their respective corners of Central Asia and Europe. This happens to be the fastest way of making two dialects of a single language grow apart and develop distinctive new characteristics: make them mingle with different foreign languages.

Thus, in the Romance family, we find little difference between Catalan, Occitan and Italian, three languages which have organically grown without much outside influence except for a short period of Germanic influence which was common to them; by contrast, Spanish and Rumanian have grown far apart (lexically, phonetically and grammatically), and this is largely due to the fact that the former has been influenced by Germanic and Arabic, while the latter was influenced by Greek and Slavic. Similarly, under the impact of languages they encountered (now mostly extinct and beyond the reach of our searchlight), and whose speakers they took over, the dialects of the IE emigrants from India differentiated much faster from each other than the dialects of Indo-Āryan.

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3.3.3 Linguistic paleontology's failure

One of the main reasons for 19th-century philologists to exclude India as a candidate for Urheimat status was the findings of a fledgling new method called *linguistic paleontology*. The idea was that from the reconstructed vocabulary, one could deduce which flora, fauna and artefacts were familiar to the speakers of the proto-language, hence also their geographical area of habitation. The presence in the common vocabulary of words denoting northern animals like the bear, wolf, elk, otter and beaver seemed to indicate a northern Urheimat; likewise, the absence of terms for the lion or elephant seemed to exclude tropical countries like India.

It should be realized that virtually all IE-speaking areas are familiar with the cold climate and its concomitant flora and fauna. Even in hot countries, the mountainous areas provide islands of cold climate, e.g. the foothills of the Himālaya have pine trees rather than palm trees, apples (though these were imported) rather than mangoes. Indians are therefore quite familiar with a range of flora and fauna usually associated with the north, including bears (Sanskrit *ṛkṣa*, cfr. Greek *arktos*), otters (*udra*, Hindi *ūd/ūdbilāv*) and wolves (*vṛka*). Elks and beavers do not live in India, yet the words exist, albeit with a different but related meaning: *ṛśa* means a male antelope, *babhru* a mongoose. The shift of meaning may have taken place in either direction: it is perfectly possible that emigrants from India transferred their term for "mongoose" to the first beavers which they encountered in Russia or other mongoose-free territory.

While the commonly-assumed northern location of PIE is at least disputable even on linguistic-paleontological grounds, as just shown, the derivation of its western loca-

tion on the basis of the famous "beech" argument is indisputably flawed. The tree name beech/*fagus*/*bhegos* exists only in the Italic, Celtic and Germanic languages with that meaning, while in Greek (spoken in a beechless country) its meaning has shifted to "a type of oak". More easterly languages do not have this word, and their speakers are not naturally familiar with this tree, which only exists in western and central Europe. Somehow, our 19th-century predecessors deduced from this that PIE was spoken in the beech-growing part of Europe.

But in that case, one might have expected that at least some of the easterly languages had taken the word with them on their eastward exodus, applying it to other but somewhat similar trees. The distribution of the "beech" term is much better explained by assuming that it was an Old-European term adopted by the IE newcomers, and never known to those IE-speakers who stayed to the east of Central Europe. Few people now take the once-decisive "beech" argument seriously anymore.

3.3.4 Positive evidence from linguistic paleontology

It is one thing to show that the fauna terms provide no proof for a northern Urheimat. In the last section it has been shown that this can be done, so that the positive evidence from linguistic paleontology for a northern Urheimat is effectively refuted. Thomas Gamkrelidze and Vyaceslav Ivanov, in their bid to prove their Anatolian Urheimat theory, have gone a step further and tried to find terms for hot-climate fauna in the common IE vocabulary.[14]

Thus, they relate Sanskrit *pṛdaku* with Greek *pardos* and Hittite *parsana*, all meaning "leopard", an IE term lost in some northern regions devoid of leopards. The word "lion" is found as a native word, in regular phonetic correspondence, in Greek, Italic, Germanic and Hittite, and with a vaguer meaning "beast", in Slavic and Tokharic. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to give it deeper roots in IE by linking it with a verb, Sanskrit *rav-*, "howl, roar", considering that the alternation r/l is common in Sanskrit (e.g. the double form *plavaga*/*pravaga*, "monkey", or the noun *plava*, "frog" related to the verb *pravate*, "jump").

A word for "monkey" is common to Greek (*kepos*) and Sanskrit (*kapi*), and Gamkrelidze and Ivanov argue for its connection with the Germanic and Celtic word "ape", which does not have the initial [k], for such k/mute alternation (which they derive from a preexisting laryngeal) is also found in other IE words, e.g. Greek *kapros* next to Latin *aper*, Dutch *ever*, "boar". For "elephant", they even found two distinct IE words: Sanskrit *ibha*, "male elephant", corresponding to Latin *ebur*, "ivory, elephant"; and Greek elephant- corresponding to Gothic *ulbandus*, Tokharic **alpi*, "camel". In the second case, the "camel" meaning may be the original one, if we assume a migration through camel-rich Central Asia to Greece, where trade contacts with Egypt made the elephant known; the word may be a derivative from a word meaning "deer", e.g. Greek *elaphos*. In the case of *ibha*/*ebur*, however,

[14] T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov: *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin 1995.

we have a linguistic-paleontological argument for an Urheimat with elephants (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov also suggest a connection with Hebrew *shen-habbim*, "tusk-of-elephant", "ivory").

An important point to note is that, contrary to common belief, the Sanskrit names of purely Indian animals all have IE etymologies: *mayūra*, "peacock"; *vyāghra*, "tiger"; *mahiṣa*, "buffalo"; *pṛśatī*, "spotted deer"; and the terms already mentioned for "monkey" and "elephant", plus some alternative names for the latter: *hastin*, *vāraṇa*, *gaja*. The standard pro-AIT reply is that these (actually some of these) are somewhat artificial words, viz. indirect descriptions: *mayūra* is "the bleater", *gaja* (from *garj-*) is "the trumpeter", *pṛśatī* is "the spotted one", *hastin* is "the one with the hand" (meaning that dextrous elephant's trunk). However, this is equally true for many other IE animal names: *ekwos*, "horse", is "the fast one" (cfr. Greek *okus*, "fast"); *babhru*, "beaver" or "mongoose", is "the brown one" (idem for Germanic bear); Slavic *medv-ed* and Sanskrit *madhv-ad*, "bear", means "honey-eater"; Latin *homo*, "human being", is "the earth-dweller" (cfr. Hebrew: *adam* = "man", *adamah* = "earth").

Often it is only in Sanskrit that this deeper etymology is still visible, e.g. wolf is "the tearer", cfr. Sanskrit *vṛka* related to *vṛk-*, "to tear"; mare is "the swift one", cfr. Sanskrit *marka*, "swift". The closeness of the animal name to its etymon in Sanskrit is also seen in the fact that one term can still denote two different animals which have the same eponymous trait: *prdāku* can mean both "snake" and "panther", (from their common trait "spotted"), whereas the Latin and Hittite equivalents have only retained the latter meaning. Finally, to clinch this argument, it may be pointed out that Sanskit *matsya*, "fish", means "the wet one", an apt but seemingly superfluous circumlocution, from which no one will conclude that the Indo-Āryans had never seen fish before invading India.

With this, we have briefly entered the game of linguistic paleontology, but not without retaining a measure of skepticism before the whole idea of reconstructing an-environment of a proto-language from the vocabulary of its much younger daughter-languages. As Stefan Zimmer has written: "The long dispute about the reliability of this 'linguistic paleontology' is not yet finished, but approaching its inevitable end - with a negative result, of course." [15] This cornerstone of the European Urheimat theory is now largely discredited. At any rate, we believe we have shown that even if valid, the findings of linguistic paleontology would be neatly compatible with an Indian Urheimat.

3.4 EXCHANGES WITH OTHER LANGUAGE FAMILIES

3.4.1 Souvenirs of language contacts

One of the best keys to the geographical itinerary of a language is the exchange of lexical and other elements with other languages. Two types of language contact should be

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distinguished. The first type of language contact is the exchange of vocabulary and other linguistic traits, whether by long-distance trade contact, by contiguity or by substratum influence, between languages which are not necessarily otherwise related. A well-known example is the transmission of terms in the sphere of cattle-breeding from IE (mostly Tokharic) to Chinese: terms for dog, horse, cow, milk, honey. This doesn't add new information on the Urheimat question but neatly confirms the long-suspected presence of Tokharic in Western China since at least the 2nd millennium BC. It also tells us a lot about the relations between the tea-drinking Chinese farmers (till today, milk is a rarity in the Chinese diet) and the milk-drinking cattle-rearing 'barbarians' on the northwestern borders.

A more surprising example is the apparent influence of Hamitic on Irish (as in the unusual word order in Irish sentences): it would seem that after the Ice Age, the European west coast was repopulated from the southwest, by Basque and even Hamitic-speaking peoples, who were assimilated into the IE and esp. the Celtic speech community, but smuggled some of their language traits into their newly adopted language. The example is interesting but does not provide information on the Urheimat, except to confirm that it was not in Celtic Western Europe.

Often, substratum elements are not identifiable with any known language. Thus, while IE has a neat decimal counting system, the Albanian and French languages show traces of a pre-IE, Old European counting system with base twenty, e.g. in French, 76 is *soixante-seize*, "60 + 16" (but in Belgian French, *septante-six*, "70 + 6", the normal Romance form), or 80 is *quatre-vingts*, "4×20". To be more precise: the analysis of 76 into 70 + 6 (as opposed to 60 + 16) is IE, but the word order may be a later innovation. The Indo-Āryan languages put the unit first: Hindi *paintīs*, 35, is 5 + 30; *paintālīs*, 45, is 5 + 40, etc. Likewise in Germanic (except English, which has adopted the French form): Dutch *zesenzeventig*, 76, is "six-and-seventy". This difference in sequence may also be due to substratum influence.

The most likely explanation is that the system with base 20 was the prevalent system in parts of Europe in the pre-IE period, and that the people retained this system at least in part even after adopting an IE dialect as their language. This way, we find glimpses of pre-IE heritage in odd corners of the IE linguistic landscape.

3.4.2 Sumerian

A few terms exchanged with Sumerian, esp. *karpāsa/kapazum*, "cotton", and possibly *ager/agar*, "field", and *go/gu*, "cow" (to cite some suggestions from Gamkrelidze and Ivanov's magnum opus), would confirm the presence of IE (though not necessarily of its PIE ancestor if Sumerian was the borrowing language) in an area conducting trade with Sumeria in the 3rd millennium or earlier. The main candidates would be Anatolia (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov's Urheimat choice) and the Indus basin.

But being the main-language of civilization in ca. 3000 BC, one could not exclude contact through long-distance trade with the Kurgan area. Note however that the trade

links between Sumeria and the Harappan civilization ("Meluhha" in Mesopotamian texts) are well-attested, e.g. the names *Arisena* and *Somasena* in a tablet from Akkad dating to ca. 2200 BC.[16] There are depictions of the Indian humped bull in Mesopotamia and even in Palestine.

Some seals with Harappan inscriptions have been found in Mesopotamia. No such attestation exists for similar contacts with the Kurgan people.

3.4.3 Uralic

A case of contact on a rather large scale which is taken as providing crucial information on the Urheimat question is between early IE and Uralic. It was a one-way traffic, imparting some Tokharic, dozens of Iranian and also a few seemingly Indo-Āryan terms to either Proto-Uralic or Proto-Finno-Ugric (i.e. mainstream Uralic after Samoyedic split off). Among the loans from Indo-Iranian or Indo-Āryan, we note *sapta*, "seven, week", *asura*, "lord", *sasar*, "sister", *śata*, "hundred".[17] At first sight, this would seem to confirm the European Urheimat theory: on their way from Europe, the Indo-lranian and Tokharic tribes encountered the Uralic people in the Ural region and imparted some vocabulary to them. This would even remain possible if, as leading scholars of Uralic suggest, the Uralic languages themselves came from farther east, from the Irtysh river and Balkhash lake area.

The question of the Uralic homeland obviously has consequences. Karoly Rédei reports on the work of a fellow Hungarian scholar, Peter Hajdu (1950s and 60s): "According to Hajdu, the Uralic Urheimat may have been in western Siberia. The defect of this theory is that it gives no explanation for the chronological and geographical conditions of its contacts between Uralians (Finno-Ugrians) and Indo-Europeans (Proto-Āryans)."[18] Not at all: Hajdu's theory explains nicely how these contacts may have taken place in Central Asia rather than in eastern Europe, and with Indo-Iranian rather than with the Western branches of IE. After the westward trek of the first IE-speaking tribes, it was the turn of the Iranians and the Uralic speakers to undertake parallel migrations to South Russia and North (European) Russia, respectively.

V. V. Napolskikh has supported the Siberian Urheimat theory of Uralic with different types of evidence from that given by Hajdu.[19] The Siberian or at least Asian Urheimat of Uralic is also indicated by its well-known links with the Altaic languages, based in Mongolia,

[16] Cited in R. S. Sharma: *Looking for the Aryans*, p. 36, with reference to J. Harmatta: "The emergence of the Indo-Iranian languages", in A. H. Dani and V. M. Masson, ed.: *History of Civilizations*, vol. 1, UNESCO Publ., Paris 1992, p. 374.

[17] A rather complete list and discussion of common IE-Uralic vocabulary is Karoly Rédei: "Die ältesten indogermanischen Lehnwörter der Uralischen Sprachen", in Denis Sinor, ed.: *The Uralic Languages: Description, History and Foreign Influences*, Brill, Leiden 1988, p. 638-664.

[18] Karoly Rédei: "Die ältesten indogermanischen Lehnwörter der Uralischen Sprachen", in Denis Sinor, ed.: *The Uralic Languages: Description, History and Foreign Influences*, p. 641.

[19] V. V. Napolskikh: "Uralic fish names and original home", *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher*, Neue Folge Band 12, Göttingen 1993, p. 35-57.

and by its less well-known links with Dravidian.[20] This much at least is well-known, that both Uralic and Dravidian have an agglutinative structure. In a first acquaintance with Hungarian and Tamil, it is striking how both have long words with the stress on the first syllable and very few of the consonant clusters so typical of IE. The case against this Siberian Urheimat for Uralic rests precisely on a European Urheimat theory of IE, as Rédei's objection to Hajdu's position illustrates. So, if we drop the European Urheimat assumption for IE, we need not maintain it for Uralic either.

In that case, two alternative explanations are equally sustainable. Imagine the first waves of emigrants from India, taking most of the ancestor-dialects of the various branches of the IE family with them, through the Oxus valley to the Wolga plain and beyond. With the exception of Tokharic which remained in the area, they did not come in contact with Uralic, or when they did, they linguistically swallowed this marginal Uralic-speaking population without allowing it much substratal influence. Only the Slavic branch of IE shows some substratal influence from Uralic (and even this is disputed), a fact which is neatly compatible with an India-to-Europe migration: an Uralic-speaking tribe in the peri-Caspian region got assimilated in the westwardly expanding IE-speaking population.

It was the Iranians who came in contact with Uralic on a large scale, partly because they filled up the whole of Central Asia and (in the Scythian expansion) even Eastern Europe as far as Western Ukraine and Belarus, where an older Slavic population subsisted and adopted a lot of Iranian vocabulary, just as the Uralic population to its northeast did; and partly because the Uralic-speaking people were moving westward through the Urals region in a movement parallel to the Iranian westward expansion. At any rate, the Iranian influence is uncontroversial and easily compatible with *any* IE Urheimat scenario.

But how do the seemingly Indo-Āryan words fit in? One possibility is that these words were imparted to Uralic by non-Iranian, Indo-Āryan-speaking emigrants from India at the time of the great catastrophe in about 2000 BC, when the Saraswatī river dried up and many of the Harappan cities were abandoned. This catastrophe triggered migrations in all directions: to the Malabar coast, to India's interior and east, to West Asia by sea (the Kassite dynasty in Babylon in ca. 1600 BC venerated some of the *Ved*ic gods)[21], and to Central Asia. The Sanskrit terms in the Mitannic language attested in Kurdistan in the 15th century BC seem to be a leftover of an Indo-Āryan presence in West Asia, which presupposes an earlier Indo-Āryan migration through (an already predominantly Iranian-speaking) Central Asia. A similar emigrant group may have ended up in an Uralic-speaking environment, imparting some of its own terminology but getting assimilated over time, just like their Mitannic cousins. The Uralic term *orya*, "slave", from either Iranian *airya* or Sanskrit *Ārya*, may indicate that their position was not as dignified as that of the Mitannic

[20] The geographically divergent connections of Dravidian have been detailed by Bernard Sergent: *Genèse l'Inde, Payot*, Paris 1997.

[21] Even according to AIT defender Prof. R. S. Sharma (*Looking for the Aryans*, p. 36), Mesopotamian inscriptions from the 16th century BC "show that the Kassites spoke the Indo-European language", and mention the *Ved*ic gods "*Suryash*" and "*Marutash*".

horse trainers.

An alternative possibility is that the linguistic exchange between Proto-Uralic and Iranian took place at a much earlier stage, before Iranian had grown distinct from Indo-Āryan. It is by no means a new suggestion that these seemingly Indo-Āryan words are in fact Indo-Iranian, i.e. dating back to before the separation of Iranian from Indo-Āryan, or in effect, before the development of typical iranianisms such as the softening of [s] to [h]. This would mean that the vanguard of the Iranian emigration from India had not yet changed *asura* and *sapta* into *ahura* and *hafta*, and that Iranian developed its typical features (some of which it shares with Armenian and Greek, most notably the said [s]>[h] shift) outside India. This tallies with the fact (admittedly only an argument *e silentio*) that the *Ved*ic reports on struggles with Iranian tribes such as the *Dāsa*s and the *Panis* (attested in Greco-Roman sources as the East-Iranian tribes Dahae and *Parnoi*), the Pakthas (Pathans?), Parshus (Persians?), Prthus (Parthians?) and Bhalanas (Baluchis?) never mention any term or phrase or name with typically features.[22]

Even the stage before Indo-Iranian unity, viz. when Indo-Iranian had not yet replaced the PIE kentum forms with its own satem forms, may already have witnessed some lexical exchanges with Uralic: as, Asko Parpola has pointed out, among the IE loans m Uralic, we find a few terms in kentum form which are exclusively attested in the Indo-Iranian branch of IE, e.g. Finnish *kehr*a*, "spindle", from PIE **kettra*, attested in Sanskrit as *cattra*.[23] It is of course also possible that words like **kettra* once did exist in branches other than Indo-Iranian but disappeared in the intervening period along with so many other original PIE words which were replaced by non-IE loans or new IE formations. If *kettra* was indeed transmitted to Uralic by early Indo-Iranian, it may have been as a result of trade instead of migration, for the Indus basin was an advanced manufacturing centre which exported goods deep into Central Asia.

This leads us to a third possibility, viz. that the seemingly Indo-Āryan words in Uralic were transmitted by long-distance traders, regardless of migrations, possibly even at a fairly late date. They may have been pure Indo-Āryan, as distinct from Iranian, normally spoken only in India itself, but brought to the Uralic people by means of long-distance trade, regardless of which languages were spoken in the territory in between, somewhat like the entry of Arabic and Persian words in European languages during the Middle Ages (e.g. *tariff, cheque, bazar, douane, chess*). If we see India in the 3rd millennium BC as the mighty metropolis whose influence radiated deep into Central Asia (as archaeology

[22]That the *Dāsa*s, *Dasyu*s (Iranian *dahyu*, "tribe") and *Panis* were Iranians and not "dark-skinned pre-Āryan aboriginals" is argued by a number of Indian anti-invasionist authors but also by Asko Parpola: "The problem of the Āryans and the Soma: textual-linguistic and archaeological evidence", in G. Erdosy: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia* (W. De Gruyter, Berlin 1995), p-367ff. The identification of *Pakthas*, *Parshus* and other tribes encountered by the *Ved*ic king *Sudas* in the "battle of the ten kings" (related in *Ṛg-Veda* VII:18, 19, 33, 83) is elaborated by Shrikant Talageri: *The Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, p. 319ff.

[23]A. Parpola in G. Erdosy: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 355.

suggests)[24], this cannot be ruled out. At any rate, I believe I have shown enough possible ways to reasonably reconcile the lexical exchange between the eastern IE languages and Uralic with an Indian Urheimat scenario.

3.4.4 "Nostratic"

Isoglosses (i.e. common traits, whether of lexical, grammatical or phonetic nature) between different languages may be due to historical contact between the languages, but also to deep kinship: just as Portuguese and Italian have both developed out of Latin (partly by absorbing each its own dose of foreign elements), and just as both Latin and Tokharic have evolved out of a common ancestor-language provisionally called PIE, so PIE must have evolved from an even earlier language, which may at the same time have been the ancestor of other language families as well.

The most important theory in this line of research is the Nostratic superfamily theory, postulating a common origin for Eskimo-Aleut, Altaic, Uralic, IE, Afro-Asiatic, Dravidian and possibly South-Caucasian. Some people make fun of this theory, and refer it jokingly to the "nostratosphere", yet its basic postulate makes perfect sense: differentiation of ancestor-languages, as attested in detail in the case of Latin and the Romance language family, must have happened at earlier stages of history as well. Whether the present superfamily theory and the methods actually used for reconstructing the supposed Nostratic vocabulary are at all acceptable, is a different matter.

The state of the art is that we just don't know very much yet about the ancestry of PIE, especially when even the location of PIE in its heyday is still the object of debate. But just to be on the safe side in case of a breakthrough of the Nostratic theory, it should be noted that the distribution of the alleged Nostratic language families at their earliest date of appearance, with most of them within travelling distance from the Indus-Saraswatī basin (Uralic in the Ob-Irtysh basin, Altaic in Mongolia, Semitic in Mesopotamia, Elamite in Iran, Dravidian on the Indian coast), is certainly compatible with a Northwest-Indian Urheimat of IE, more than with a European Urheimat. For the rest, it is best to leave these proto-proto-languages alone and concentrate on real language families.

3.4.5 Semitic

Semitic (and by implication also the Chadic, Kushitic and Hamitic branches of the Afro-Asiatic family, assumed to be the result of a pre-4th-millennium migration of early agriculturists from West Asia into North Africa) is suspected to spring from a common ancestor with IE, even by scholars skeptical of Nostratic adventures. The commonality of some elementary lexical items is striking, and includes the numerals 6 and 7 (Hebrew *shisha*,

[24]In the margin of the 1996 South Asia Conference in Madison, Wisconsin, Prof. J. M. Kenoyer did a slide show on beads and jewels found in Central Asia: many of them, it turned out, were imported from the Harappan civilization.

shiva, Arabic *sitta*, *sab'a*, conceivably borrowed at the time when counting was extended beyond the fingers of a single hand for the first time), arguably even all the first seven numerals.

Contact with Akkadian (the Semitic language of Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC) and even Proto-Semitic is attested by a good handful of words, esp. some terms for utensils and animals. This includes two terms for "axe": PIE **peleku*, Greek *pelekus*, Ossetic *faeraet*, Sanskrit *paraśu*, "axe", related (one way or the other) to Akkadian *pilaqqu*, "axe", cfr. Arabic *falaqa*, "to split apart"; and PIE **sekwr*, Latin *securis*, "axe", *secula*, "hatchet", Old Slavic *sekyra*, "hatchet", related to a Semitic root yielding Akkadian *shukurru*, "javelin", Hebrew *segor*, "axe". Some terms are in common only with the Western IE languages, e.g. Semitic *gedi*, still recognizable in English "goat". This testimony is too slender, though, for concluding that the Western Indo-Europeans had come from the East and encountered the Semites on their way to the West.

Even more remarkable are the common fundamental grammatical traits, which indicate a common genetic origin rather than an influence from the one language family on the other. Semitic, like IE, has grammatically functional vowel changes, grammatical gender, declension, conjugational categories including participles and medial and passive modes, and a range of phonemes which in Proto-Semitic was almost entirely in common with PIE, even more so if we assume PIE laryngeals to match Semitic *aleph*, *he* and *'ayn*. Many of these grammatical elements are shared only by Semitic (or Afro-Asiatic) and IE, setting them off as a pair against all other language families. If any language family has a chance of being the sister of the IE family, it is Semitic.

One way to imagine how Semitic and IE went their separate ways has been offered by Bernard Sergent, who is strongly convinced of the two families' common origin. He combines the linguistic evidence with archaeological and anthropological indications that the (supposedly PIE-speaking) Kurgan people in the North-Caspian area of ca. 4000 BC came from the southeast, a finding which might just as well be cited in support of their Indian origin. Thus, the Kurgan people's typical grain was millet, not the rye and wheat cultivated by the Old Europeans, and in ca. 5000 BC, millet had been cultivated in what is now Turkmenistan (it apparently originates in China), particularly in the Mesolithic culture of Jebel. From there on, the archaeological traces become really tenuous, but Sergent claims to discern a link with the Zarzian culture of Kurdistan 10,000 to 8500 BC. Short, he suggests that the Kurgan people had come along the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea, not from the southeast (India) but the southwest, in or near Mesopotamia, where PIE may have had a common homeland with Semitic.[25]

However, those who interpret the archaeological data concerning the genesis of agriculture in the Indus site of Mehrgarh as being the effect of a diffusion from West Asia, may well interpret an eventual kinship of IE with Semitic as proving their own point: along with its material culture, Mehrgarh's language may have been an offshoot of a metropolitan model,

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[25] Bernard Sergent: *Les Indo-Européens*, Payot, Paris 1995, p. 398 and p. 432.

viz. a Proto-Semitic-speaking culture in West Asia. This would mean that the Indus area was indeed the homeland of the original PIE, but that in the preceding millennia, PIE had been created by the interaction of Proto-Semitic-speaking colonists from West Asia with locals. On the other hand, now that the case for an independent genesis of the Neolithic revolution (i.e. the development of agriculture) in Mehrgarh is getting stronger, we may have to reconsider the direction of such a process.

At any rate, the actual proof for the Mesopotamian origin of the pre-Kurganite culture to the east of the Caspian Sea has not yet been established. Archaeologists favouring an Indian Urheimat ought to take up the challenge and materially trace this culture to pre-Harappan India. At the same time, linguists should develop a more precise model of the ancient relationship between IE and Semitic.

3.4.6 Dravidian substratum elements

Apart from contact between different languages which have continued to exist, there can also be influence from a disappearing language on a surviving language, often in the form of a substratum: people take to speaking a new (mostly the elite's) language, and drop their old language all while preserving some lexical items, some phonetic propensities, some grammatical ways of organizing information. The alleged presence of a large dose of "pre-Āryan" substratum features in Sanskrit and the other Indo-Āryan languages, notably from now-extinct Dravidian languages once spoken in northern India, was historically one of the important reason for deciding against India as the Urheimat.

In the 19th century, it was not yet realized how the European branches of IE are all full of substratum elements, mostly from extinct Old European languages. For Latin, this includes such elementary terms as *lapis* and *urbs*, borrowed from a substratum language tentatively described as "Urbian". For Germanic, it includes some 30% of the acknowledged "Germanic" vocabulary, including such core lexical items as *sheep* and *drink*. For Greek, it amounts to some 40% of the vocabulary, both from extinct branches of the Anatolian (Hittite-related) family and from non-IE languages. The branch least affected by foreign elements is Slavic, but this need not be taken as proof of a South-Russian homeland: in an Indian Urheimat scenario, the way for Slavic would have been cleared by forerunners on the great IE trek to the West, chiefly Celtic and Germanic, and though these languages would absorb many Old-European elements as substratum features, they also eliminated the Old-European languages as such and prevented them from further influencing Slavic.

Even if we accept as non-IE all the elements in Sanskrit described as such by various scholars, the non-IE contribution is still not greater than in some of the European branches of IE.[26] And, as Shrikant Talageri has shown, a large part of this so-called Dravidian con-

[26] Among the highest estimates is the 5% to 9% of Dravidian loans in *Ved*ic Sanskrit proposed by F. B. J. Kuiper: *Aryans in the Rigveda*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 1991. On p. 90 ff., he gives a list of 383 "foreign words in the Rigvedic language", including such obviously IE words as *akṣa*, "axle", *pṛdāku*, "leopard"; *bala*, "strength" (cf. Greek *beltiOn*, "better"). Madhav Deshpande rejects Kuiper's presupposition

tribution is highly questionable: many words routinely described as Dravidian-originated can be analyzed as pure IE.[27] Numerous supposed loanwords have no counterpart in Dravidian and Munda, or when they do, there is often no reason to assume that the direction of borrowing was into rather than out of Indo-Āryan, especially when you consider that Dravidian is attested in writing at least 1500 years after (and at a distance of 2000 km from) the Sanskrit sources, and Munda has not been committed to writing until the 19th century.

The observation had been made earlier by Western scholars: the convergence of Indo-Āryan and Dravidian (as well as Munda and to an extent Burushaski) in lexical and grammatical features need not be due to a Dravidian substratum, for which there are in fact no compelling indications.[28] At any rate, there has been so much interaction of Indo-Āryan with Dravidian, including exchange of people and goods, that a Dravidian contribution (as a neighbourly or *adstratum* influence) is perfectly normal even without any substratum effect. This contribution remains in any case much smaller than the well-known Indo-Āryan influence on the Dravidian languages, which no one tries to explain as a substratum effect.

In this respect, the testimony of the place-names may be useful. In the Hindi belt and most of Panjab, there is absolutely no evidence of a Dravidian substratum in the toponyms. By contrast, in Sindh and Gujarat, Dravidian toponyms are fairly common, e.g. names ending in *valli/palli*, "village". In Sindhi, and more so in Gujarati and Marāṭhi, Dravidian influence is discernible, e.g. in the existence of two pronouns for we, an inclusive one (including the speaker as well as the person addressed) and an exclusive one (including only the speaker and his group, like in the French expression *nous autres*). By contrast, Hindi has much fewer Dravidian elements, even "losing" (or just never having had) a number of loanwords which had been adopted in Sanskrit. There is no reason to assume a Dravidian presence in North India, but it seems to have been there in the coastal area.

This would fit in with David McAlpin's Elamo-Dravidian theory, which puts Proto-Elamo-Dravidian on the coast of Iran, spreading westwards to Mesopotamia (Elam) and eastwards to Sindh and along the Indian coast southwards.[29] This theory is supported by

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that there was considerable Indo-Āryan-Dravidian bilinguism: "There is not the slightest evidence in the Ṛg-Veda of any large-scale bilingualism or social or religious convergence of *Ved*ic Āryans with non-Āryans." (Deshpande and Hook, *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, p. 253).

[27] Shrikant Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, p. 156-175. To this effect, Thomas Burrow (in Thomas A. Seebok: *Current Trends in Linguistics*, Mouton, The Hague/Paris, vol.5, p. 18, quoted by Talageri, op.cit., p. 162) already wrote that "there has been a certain amount of controversy concerning the question of non-Āryan loan-words in Sanskrit, and some scholars (P. Thieme, H. W. Bailey) have adopted a sceptical position in this respect. Alternate Indo-European etymologies have been offered for words for which a Dravidian or Munda etymology had previously been proposed, in some cases successfully (...)but more dubious in other cases."

[28] Summarized by Edwin Bryant: "Linguistic Substrata and the Indo-Aryan Migration Debate", read at the 1996 Atlanta conference on the Indus-Saraswatī civilization; he mentions Jules Bloch and Hans Hock, among others, to this effect.

[29] See e.g. D. McAlpin: "Linguistic Prehistory: the Dravidian Situation", in M. M. Deshpande and

the similarities between the undeciphered early Elamite script and the Harappan script, and by the survival of the Brahui Dravidian speech pocket in Baluchistan. It would make the Harappan culture area bi- and possibly multi-lingual: a perfectly normal situation, comparable with multi-lingual Mesopotamia or with Latin-Greek bilinguism in the Roman Empire.

But in that case, Indo-Āryan influence on Dravidian may be much older than usually assumed, and date back well into the heyday of Harappan culture. However, the Dravidians influenced by Indo-Āryan in Gujarat and Maharashtra may have been a dead-end in the history of Dravidian, losing their language altogether. There is no trace of Harappans migrating south, whether to save their Dravidian language from Indo-Āryan contamination or for other, more likely reasons.

Either way, Indo-Āryan influence on Dravidian is certainly more profound than generally thought. Apart from the *tatsama* (literally adopted) Sanskrit words which make up more than half of Telugu or Kannada vocabulary, and which are attributed to the influence of Brahmin families settling in South India since the turn of the Christian era, many apparent members of the Dravidian core vocabulary as attested in Sangam Tamil are actually very ancient *tadbhava* (evolved and sometimes unrecognizably changed) loans from Sanskrit or Prakrit, e.g. *ākāyam*, "sky" (< *ākāśa*); *āyutham*, "weapon" (< *āyudha*); *tavem*, "penance" (< *tapas*); *tīvu*, "island" (< *dvīpa*); *chetti*, "foreman, merchant" (< *śreṣṭhī*), *tiru*, term of respectful address (< *śrī*). [30] It is not impossible that there ever was a pure Dravidian language in South India, but in the oldest texts already, we find a Dravidian written in a Brahmi-derived script and influenced by Sanskrit.

Many scholars now assume that there was a third language in northwestern India, which acted as a buffer between Dravidian and Indo-Āryan before being eliminated by the latter. Words looking like Dravidian loans in Indo-Āryan could then in fact have been borrowed from this third language into both Indo-Āryan and Dravidian. To Indian critics of linguistics as a "pseudoscience", such a ghost language is a perfect proof of the purely speculative nature of our science. Yet, it is an entirely reasonable proposition: even Sumerian, one of the great vehicles of civilization, died out, and we have reason to assume that the Bhil tribals originally spoke a different language, possibly related to the isolated tribal Nahali language still spoken in a few villages in Madhya Pradesh.

Such a buffer language would at any rate explain, in an Indian Urheimat theory, why there is no Dravidian influence on IE as a whole, merely on Indo-Āryan and to a very small extent on Iranian (though it is remarkable that some of the words transmitted from Indo-Iranian to Uralic are usually credited with a Dravidian origin, e.g. *śiśu*, "child", and *kota*, "house": another modest argument for an Indian Urheimat?). By the time the buffer language had been swallowed and Dravidian-IE interaction began, most of the IE proto-languages had already left India.

P. E. Hook, eds.: *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*, Ann Arbor 1979.

[30] R. Swaminatha Aiyar: *Dravidian Theories*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1987 (but written in 1923).

As for the alleged Dravidian substratum influence on Indo-Āryan phonetics, viz. the retroflex or cerebral consonants in Indo-Āryan (as well as in Dravidian), there has always been a school which rejects the hypothesis of a Dravidian origin. According to Eric Hamp, the phonetic conditions favouring the differentiation dental/retroflex "can be traced in the Indo-European patrimony of Sanskrit".[31] Though Hamp is not yet prepared to discard a Dravidian influence in cerebralization altogether, he does note certain facts which plead against a Dravidian origin, e.g. the absence of retroflexes in initial position. The debate is still open, but the case for an indigenous IE origin is getting stronger. Also, a Dravidian origin of the retroflexes would not prove the Āryan invasion, merely that the interaction of Dravidian and Indo-Āryan happened later than the latter's separation from its IE sister branches.

3.4.7 Sino-Tibetan

To prove an Asian homeland for IE, it is not good enough to diminish the connections between IE and more westerly language families. To anchor IE in Asia, the strongest argument would be genetic kinship with an East-Asian language family.

There have been very early contacts between IE and Chinese, fossilized in IE loan-words in Chinese, e.g. *ma* (< **mra*, cfr. *mare*, Sanskrit *marka*, "swift"), "horse"; *quan*, "hound"; *sun*, "grandson" (cfr. son); *mi*, "honey" (cfr. mead, Sanskrit *madhu*); *gu*, "bull", and *niu*, "cow" (through **ngiu*, from IE **gwou-*); and, more recently, *shi*, "lion" (Iranian *sher*). Chang Tsung-tung has pleaded that there were linguistic and cultural contacts between Indo-Europeans from Inner Asia and late-neolithic Chinese peasants, who learned cattle-breeding from them.[32] These loans generally came through Tokharic, which we know was the northwestern neighbour of Chinese for many centuries, at least since the turn of the 1st millennium BC when the Tokhars are mentioned in records of the Western Zhou dynasty, and until the mid-1st millennium AD.

The contact between Tokharic and Chinese adds little to our knowledge of the Urheimat but merely confirms that the Tokharic people lived that far east. The adoption of almost the whole range of domesticated cattle-names from Tokharic into Chinese also emphasizes a fact insufficiently realized, viz. how innovative the cattle-breeding culture of the early IE tribes really was. They ranked as powerful and capable, and their prestige helped them to assimilate large populations culturally and linguistically. But for Urheimat-related trails, we must look elsewhere.

*Ved*ic Sanskrit and ancient Greek, and therefore perhaps also PIE, had a pitch accent, a typical feature of Proto-Sino-Tibetan, preserved in Chinese and in a smaller way in Tibetan. True, the behaviour of this pitch accent is completely different in *Ved*ic from what it is in Sino-Tibetan. But that is only what you would expect after millennia of separate

[31] Eric P. Hamp: "On the Indo-European Origins of the Retroflexes in Sanskrit", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1996, p. 720.

[32] Quoted in Stefan Zimmer: *Ursprache, Urvolk und Indogermanisierung*, Innsbruck 1990, p. 25.

development; after all, the behaviour of the pitch accent is completely different between some of the Sino-Tibetan languages as well. Picking up this hint from a similarity in accentuation, scholars have looked around for other "deep", structural similarities, e.g. the presumed fact that all PIE roots, like the Sino-Tibetan roots, were monosyllabic, while the original Sino-Tibetan roots (very unlike the modern Chinese words) resembled the IE roots in being rich in consonant clusters.[33]

Edwin Pulleyblank claims to have reconstructed a number of rather abstract similarities in the phonetics and morphology of PIE and Sino-Tibetan. Though he fails to back this structural similarity up with any (even a single) lexical similarity, he confidently dismisses as a "prejudice" the phenomenon that "for a variety of reasons, the possibility, of a genetic relationship between these two language families strikes most people as inherently most improbable." He believes that "there is no compelling reason from the point of view of either linguistics or archaeology to rule out the possibility of a genetic connection between Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European. Such a connection is certainly inconsistent with a European or Anatolian homeland for the Indo-Europeans but it is much less so with the Kurgan theory", esp. considering that the Kurgan culture "was not the result of local evolution in that region but had its source in an intrusion from an earlier culture farther east".[34] This is of course very interesting, (and it deserves being repeated that the Kurgan culture came from farther east), but: "It will be necessary to demonstrate the existence of a considerable number of cognates linked by regular sound correspondences. To do so in a way that will convince the doubters on both sides of the equation will be a formidable task."[35]

Apart from Pulleyblank's vision of a deep, Nostratic-type connection between Sino-Tibetan and PIE, we should also consider the question of influence, especially the interaction with neighbouring Tibetan. There is of course a mass of Buddhistic loan-words which crept into Tibetan during the Middle Ages, but they tell us nothing about origins.

As Prof. Ulrich Libbrecht writes, the Tibetans were not native to their present habitat, and immigrated there in the historical period: "The general ethnic movement of the Sinitic-speaking peoples was southward. The immigration of Tai- and Tibeto-Burman-speaking languages in Indochina has entirely taken place within the historical period. The same is true of the Chinese-speaking peoples from the middle part of the Yellow River basin

[33]As remarked in 1952 by Oswald Szemerenyi, quoted to this effect by Edwin G. Pulleyblank: "The Typology of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, spring 1993, p. 63-118, spec. p. 63 -64.

[34]Edwin Pulleyblank: "The Typology of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, spring 1993, p. 106-107. The article is followed by two sharply critical pieces of comment, but the focus of their criticism is not the connection between Sino-Tibetan and PIE, though the authors do no conceal their skepticism of that point too. Remark that the claim of typological similarity with PIE, here made by Pulleyblank for Sino-Tibetan, is also made by others for North-Caucasian, and that the triangle is closed by yet other argumentations for a typological (and even lexical) relation between North-Caucasian and Sino-Tibetan, e.g. S. A. Starostin: "Word-final Resonents in Sino-Caucasian", *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, June 1996, p. 281-311.

[35]Edwin Pulleyblank: "The Typology of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, spring 1993, p. 109.

towards the southern and eastern coast. Indications from Greek geographers and in Tibetan traditions teach us that the early centre of these peoples lay more to the north than present-day Tibet, viz. in the upper Yangzi basin. It is suspected that the centre of dispersion of the Sinitic languages was near the Koko-nor lake, at the borders of China proper, Tibet and Mongolia. From there, one branch spread eastward and formed the Chinese language; another went southward to form the Tibeto-Burman subgroup. The cause of this dispersal may well be found in the periodic droughts affecting Inner Asia in prehistoric and historical periods." [36]

Likewise, George van Driem confirms: "The Tibeto-Burman proto-homeland or Urheimat probably lay at the language family's current centre of gravity, which is basically western Sichuan, northern Yunnan and eastern Tibet." [37]

So, unless PIE came from China, there may have been thousands of years without any substantial contact between IE and Sino-Tibetan, the first contact being the Tokharian settlement on the Chinese border. No evidence of contact has been identified for the PIE period, but the case for a distant genetic kinship remains in the balance.

3.4.8 Austronesian

A language family with unexpected similarities to IE, similarities which may provide a strong geographical clue, is Austronesian. This family of languages is the one with the second greatest geographical spread after IE: from Madagascar through Malaysia and Indonesia, Taiwan and the Philippines, to Melanesia and Polynesia, as far south as New Zealand, as far east as Hawaii and Easter Island. So, what is the relation of Austronesian to Indo-Āryan and to PIE?

According to Franklin Southworth: "The presence of other ethnic groups, speaking other languages [than IE, Dravidian or Munda], must be assumed (...) numerous examples can be found to suggest early contact with language groups now unrepresented in the subcontinent. A single example will be noted here. The word for 'mother' in several of the Dardic languages, as well as in Nepali, Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati, and Marāṭhi (...) is *āī* (or a similar form). The source of this is clearly the same as that of classical Tamil *āy*, 'mother'. These words are apparently connected with a widespread group of words found in Malayo-Polynesian (cf. Proto-Austronesian **bayi* ...) and elsewhere. The distribution of this word in Indo-Āryan suggests that it must have entered Old Indo-Āryan very early (presumably as a nursery word, and thus not likely to appear in religious texts), before the movement of Indo-Āryan speakers out of the Panjab. In Dravidian, this word is well-represented in all branches (though *ammā* is perhaps an older word) and thus, if it

[36] U. Libbrecht: *Historische Grammatika van het Chinees*, part III, Leuven 1978, p. 3-4. In my opinion, the fertile and moderate-climate Yellow River basin itself is a more likely centre of dispersal. Either way, it is a long distance from northwestern India, not to mention the other regions proposed as Urheimat for IE.

[37] George van Driem: "Language change, conjugational morphology and the Sino-Tibetan Urheimat", 1993, abstract on http://iias.leidenuniv.ni/host/himalaya/abstracts/lcc.html

is a borrowing, it must be a very early one."[38]

Next to *āyī*, "mother", Marāṭhi has the form *bāī*, "lady", as in *Tārābāī*, *Lakṣmībāī* etc.; the same two forms are attested in Austronesian. So, we have a nearly pan-Indian word, attested from Nepal and Kashmir to Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, and seemingly related to Austronesian. For another example: "Malayo-Polynesian shares cognate forms of a few [words which are attested in both Indo-Āryan and Dravidian], notably Old Indo-Āryan *phala-* ['fruit'], Dravidian *paḷam*['ripe fruit'], etc. (cf. Proto-Austronesian **paḷam*, 'to ripen a fruit artificially'), and the words for rice."[39]

Austronesian seems to have very early and very profound links with IE. In the personal pronouns (e.g. Proto-Austronesian **aku*, cfr. ego), the first four numerals (e.g. Malay *dua* for "two") and other elementary vocabulary (e.g. the words for "water" and "land"), the similarity is too striking to be missed. Remarkable lexical similarities had been reported since at least the 1930s, and they have been presented by Isidore Dyen in 1966.[40] Dyen's comparisons are sometimes not too obvious but satisfy the linguistic requirement of regularity. At the same time, this lexical influence or exchange is not backed up by grammatical similarities: in contrast with the elaborate categories of IE grammar, Austronesian grammar looks very unsystematic and primitive, the textbook example being the Malay plural by reduplication, as in *orang*, "man", *orang-orang*, "men".[41]

Most scholars of IE including myself know too little of Austronesian to verify Dyen's suggestion, and all of us tend to remind ourselves of the existence of pure coincidence when confronted with these data. At any rate, the relation would be one between the entire Austronesian and the entire Indo-European family, indicating that it pre-dates their split into daughter languages. Moreover, it concerns the very core of the vocabulary. Further, it so happens that some Austronesian languages have the typically Indian cerebral or retroflex consonants; it is possible that this was an original feature of Proto-Austronesian, which its other daughter languages have lost.

As for the language structure, the similarity between PIE and Proto-Austronesian is not established as being much above statistical coincidence. It is, in that case, much less than that between PIE and Proto-Semitic, which latter is still not enough to convince all linguists of a genetic relationship rather than an influence through contact. At first sight, the similarities between IE and Austronesian vocabularies may therefore better be explained through contact than through a genetic relationship. In this case, we may also be

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[38]Franklin Southworth: "Indo-Aryan and Dravidian", in M. Deshpande & P. E. Hook: *Aryan & Non-Aryan in India*, Arm Arbor 1979, p. 205. *āy*, "mother" is also attested in Nahali, vide F. B. J. Kuiper: *Nahali, a Comparative Study*, Amsterdam 1962, p. 60.

[39]Franklin Southworth: "Indo-Aryan and Dravidian", in M. Deshpande & P. E. Hook: *Aryan & Non-Aryan in India*, p. 206.

[40]I. Dyen in G. Cardona : *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, Philadelphia 1970, proceedings of the Third Indo-European Conference, 1966, p. 431-440.

[41]It goes without saying that "primitiveness" in grammar says nothing about the civilizational level of a language community; Chinese is spoken by a highly civilized people, but its grammar strikes native speakers of German or Russian as very childlike.

dealing with a case of heavy pidginization: a mixed population adopting lexical items from PIE but making up a grammar from scratch. Then again, genetically related languages may become completely different in language structure (e.g. English vs. Sanskrit, Chinese vs. Tibetan). Dyen therefore saw no objection to postulating a common genetic origin rather than an early large-scale borrowing.

Dyen cannot be accused of an Indian Urheimat bias either for IE or for Austronesian. For the latter, "Dyen's lexicostatistical classification of Austronesian suggested a Melanesian homeland, a conclusion at variance with all other sources of information (...) heavy borrowing and numerous shifts in and around New Guinea have obviously distorted the picture", according to Peter Bellwood.[42] It is in spite of his opinions about the Austronesian and IE homelands that he felt forced to face facts concerning IE-Austronesian similarities. Meanwhile, the dominant opinion as reported by Bellwood is that Southeast China and Taiwan are the Urheimat from where Austronesian expanded in all seaborne directions (hence its proposed substratum presence in Japanese, a rather hard nut to crack for an Indian Urheimat theory of Austronesian).

Yet, just as the Kurgan culture may be a secondary centre of IE dispersal, formed by immigrants from India, the supposed Southeast-Chinese Urheimat of Austronesian may itself be a secondary homeland. If there is to be a point of contact between PIE and Proto-Austronesian, it is hard to imagine it in another location than India.

Bernard Sergent suggests northern China, arguing that the yellow race as a whole comes from there, and that the Chinese-Siberian border was the place of contact between white Indo-Europeans and the yellow race, including speakers of Sino-Tibetan, Austro-Asiatic (Munda, Khmer) and Austronesian.[43] But that is a *petitio principii*; just as it need not be assumed that the Proto-Indo-Europeans were blonde Nordics (as Sergent himself has forcefully argued)[44], there is no ground for racial assumptions about the Austronesians. If they originated in India, they should have been brown-skinned (as most of them still are) rather than yellow. Moreover, even if it is assumed that Austronesian came from southern China, there is no need to trace it further back to northern China; and if its very thin connection to northern China is sufficient for an impressive amount of IE-Austronesian isoglosses, how come there aren't even more IE-Chinese isoglosses, as Chinese or Sino-Tibetan has a much longer certified presence in northern China on the border with the barbarians?

For another alternative: suppose the Indo-Europeans and the Austronesians shared a homeland somewhere in southern China or Southeast Asia. An entry of the Indo-Europeans into India from the east, arriving by boat from Southeast Asia, is an interesting thought experiment, if only to free ourselves from entrenched stereotypes. Why not counter the Western AIT with an Eastern AIT? Just imagine, a wayward Austronesian tribe sailed up

[42] Peter Bellwood: "An archaeologist's view of language macrofamily relationships", *Oceanic Linguistics*, December 1994, p. 391-406.

[43] Bernard Sergent: *Les Indo-Européens*, p-398.

[44] *ibid.* p. 435

the Gaṅgā led by one *Manu* who, as related in the *Purāṇa*s, started Āryan history in the mid-Gaṅgā basin (Ayodhyā, Prayāg, Kāśi), and whose progeny subsequently conquered the Indus basin and expanded further westward. In that case, the elaborate structure of PIE would be an innovation due to a peculiar intellectual culture (let's call it proto-brahminism) and to the influence of local languages, including perhaps a lost branch of Semitic spoken by colonists who had brought agriculture from West Asia to Indus settlements like Mehrgarh. This is of course a speculation, a highly provisional thought experiment made in order to accomodate the 'theory' of IE-Semitic kinship in the present 'theory' of IE-Austronesian kinship.

I will welcome any new evidence which forces us to take the southeastern scenario seriously. Until then, if there has to be a common homeland of IE and Austronesian, I consider India more likely. India, in this case, may have to be understood as including the submerged lands to its south which were inhabited perhaps as late as 5000 BC. The scenario that unfolds is of India as a major demographic growth centre, from which IE spread to the north and west and Austronesian to the southeast as far as Polynesia. Though disappearing from India, Austronesian expanded in the same period and just as spectacularly as IE. These two most impressive linguistic migrations would then have been part of one India-centred expansion movement spanning the Old World from Iceland to New Zealand.

3.5 CONCLUSION

We have just studied the pro and contra of some *prima facie* indications for language contacts which would imply an ancient IE and even PIE presence in Harappan and pre-Harappan India. In my opinion, none of these can presently be considered decisive evidence for an Indian Urheimat theory, though some of them are indeed suggestive in that direction.

However, to put the strengths and weaknesses of our findings in the proper perspective, we should not forget to also evaluate the evidence from language contacts for the rivalling European Urheimat theory, which should be put to the same tests as the Indian Urheimat theory. The fact is that such evidence is very scarce, if not non-existent. The Old-European Basque language has no ancient links with IE. For the rest, all Old-European languages have disappeared and most have not even survived as dead inscriptional languages providing us with material for linguistic comparison. Evidence of the type tentatively provided by isoglosses between IE and Semitic, Austronesian or Uralic, all Asian language families, is simply not available for the westerly branches of IE or for a hypothetical Europe-based PIE. On balance, the evidence from contact with once-neighbouring languages does not provide compelling evidence for an Indian Urheimat (unless the Austronesian connection is valid), but even less evidence for a European Urheimat.

It is too early to say that linguistics has proven an Indian origin for the IE family. But we can assert with confidence that the oft-invoked linguistic evidence for a European Urheimat and for an Āryan invasion of India is completely wanting. One after another,

the classical proofs of the European Urheimat theory have been discredited, usually by scholars who had no knowledge of or interest in an alternative Indian Urheimat theory. In the absence of a final judgment by linguistics, other approaches deserve to be taken seriously, unhindered and uninhibited by fear of that large-looming but in fact elusive "linguistic evidence".

Chapter 4

Miscellaneous Aspects of the Āryan Invasion Debate

4.1 DEMOGRAPHICAL COMMON SENSE

4.1.1 A beehive

The expansion of the IE languages must have started with a certain amount of emigration from the Urheimat, though at later stages the numerical importance of natives joining the new speech community of immigrants and expanding it further in their turn became preponderant: "The transfer of languages like a baton in a relay race refers precisely to the gradual spread of the speakers from the initial area (but not necessarily from inside of it!). Such an expansion can have only one reason: population growth in ecological conditions unusually favourable (for ancient times)." [1]

With its extensive and fertile river systems of the Indus, Saraswatī and Gaṅgā, India was the best place on earth for food production, for demographic growth, for cultural life and for scientific progress. That is not a chauvinistic myth, but a materialist dogma: economic quantity generates quality in the superstructure. It is quite certain that, after mankind had been wandering over the earth for several hundreds of centuries, trying out the best places for survival, a generous country like India must have had a large population. Next, it is perfectly plausible that large groups of Indians went to other countries as traders and colonists, precisely like the Europeans did when it was their turn to have a demographical as well as a technological edge over their neighbours. And just like a dominant Spanish minority managed to make its own language the mother-tongue of much larger populations which are genetically predominantly Native American, so also the slightly darker emigrants from India may have passed on their language to the white people of Russia and Europe.

[1] I. M. Diakonov: "On the Original Home of the Speakers of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1-2/1985, p. 92-174, spec. p-153-154.

The view of some chauvinist Hindu writers that "the ancient Hindus colonized the world", may have a grain of truth in it.[2]

Saying that India had a large population may not sound very revolutionary, yet in the context of the AIT, it is. The theory of the Āryan Invasions, complemented by the secondary theory of an earlier Dravidian invasion, assumes, as it were, that India was nearly empty. On the other hand, the steppes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia must have been a beehive of people. Today, the huge ex-Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan has hardly more people than the city of Mumbai, but in those days, the steppes had so many people, most of them "Āryans", that they could flood both India and Europe with them; at least according to the AIT. So, against that common though unspoken presupposition, it has somehow become quite a statement to say that lands with a hospitable climate like India had a bigger population than the outlying steppes, and were a more likely source of emigrants.

In the early days of the Āryan theory, it was often assumed that civilization had to come from the North. One argument given was that people in the Tropics didn't need either effort or ingenuity to survive, since they just had to pick bananas from trees or wait for coconuts to rain down; while by contrast, people in the North were forced to be inventive, creative and hard-working. Yet, there were advanced civilisations in the Tropics: Zimbabwe, Ghana, the Mayas, the Incas. Within Europe, it is the North which received civilizing influences from the South. This is not to belittle the ingenuity and effort of North-Europeans in their struggle for survival in tough circumstances - but that is precisely the point: they had to use their skills in the struggle for life, while people in a more comfortable climate (Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, India) had more leisure to focus on the long-term development of complex civilizational achievements. Therefore, it is quite normal that the greatest advances were made in places like India, that the demographic growth was the greatest there, and that consequently, IE expansion went from India to Russia and Germany rather than the reverse.

4.1.2 Civilization and demography

Population growth at that stage was mainly the effect of the recently invented practice of agriculture. The IE Urheimat was consequently a centre of agriculture, and the Proto-Indo-Europeans were a sedentary population, and not nomads as is often claimed: "Why does a migration happen? We have to distinguish two things in this context: the migrations of nomads (and of other tribes uprooted by waves of nomadic migration) and other migrations. The Proto-Indo-Europeans were no nomads: their well-developed agricultural and social terminology testifies against this; and so does history: nomadism is mobile cattle-breeding with regular change of pasture on vast territories, either absolutely without agriculture (agricultural products were to be stolen or bought) or with underdeveloped subsidiary

[2] E.g. Harbilas Sarda: *Hindu Superiority*, 1906; Krishan Lal Jain: *Hindu Raj in the World*, 1989: and K. L. Jain Vasasisya: *The Indian Asuras Colonised Europe.*

agriculture. Nomadism supposes riding with cattle: either horse-riding or camel-riding. Chariots are not suitable for tending cattle: they are no good on broken terrain and require very specialized service. The Middle East did not know true nomadism until the last centuries of the second millennium BC (...) Nomadism did not exist in Middle Asia (...) until the second millennium BC either."[3]

The charioteers of the *Ved*ic culture were not fresh arrivals from the steppe, but members of a mature sedentary civilization. Such a civilization is the source more than the goal of migrations. In many versions of the Āryan migration theory, it is assumed that the Āryans originally lived in inhospitable territory and subsequently descended upon lands with a more pleasant climate and material culture. This scenario is familiar throughout history, e.g. the steppe nomads overrunning parts or all of China, time and again. However, the outcome of such episodes is systematically the opposite of the general outcome of IE expansion: the invaders were usually assimilated into the sedentary civilization which they had overpowered in battle, if they were not driven back out. The Mongols became Chinese in China, Muslim in Iran, and of the enormous territory they conquered, there is (with the exception of Kalmukkia) not one square mile where a native language was permanently replaced with Mongolian.

Only when the conquest was focused on a smaller and manageable area did it produce a lasting imposition of the conquerors' language, e.g. the Uralic settlement in Pannonia, now Hungary. The Germanic conquests at the end of the Roman period resulted in a lasting germanization of the thinly populated areas where it was supported by a strong demographic influx (Austria, Bavaria, much of Switzerland and Belgium, England), partly made possible by the advances of the Slavs who pushed Germanic tribes westward and thus made them available for colonizing the newly-won lands. But the Germanic element disappeared quickly in a far larger part of the conquered territories: France, Italy, Spain, North Africa and Ukraine.

It seems that the model of the barbarians overrunning vast tracts of the more civilized world generally does not apply to the IE expansion. A far better model in this case is European colonization. Europe was going through a period of fast demographic growth, and had gained a technological (including a military) lead; so, it became the source of massive emigration, and it managed to europeanize whole continents with permanent effect (in spite of nativist revivals, it is improbable that English and Spanish will leave Oceania and the Americas anytime soon). Similarly, the Indo-Europeanization of such a vast area could only succeed because the Urheimat had produced a technological lead and a demographic surplus.

To be sure, there are the inevitable differences: in much of the New World, there was a racial discontinuity, a physical replacement of the Native with the European race; in the case of IE expansion, there seems to have been more racial continuity and assimilation. But then again, judging by present trends, a few centuries will suffice to restore the Native

[3]Diakonov: "On the Original Home", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1-2/1985, p. 148-149.

American racial element to some prominence; the USA will not be a white country even though its citizens will still use the language which the white man brought. In that case, the end result will be quite similar to that of IE expansion: the spread of a language and culture to areas and populations with different racial complexions.

At any rate, a good demographic starting-point was needed to make the transcontinental and transracial expansion of IE possible. With an agricultural and urban population larger than that of all contemporaneous civilizations combined, the pre- or early Harappan culture of northwestern India was an excellent candidate.

4.2 TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

4.2.1 *Ayu* and *Amavasu*

In this section, we will consider the sparse attempts to discover references to the Āryan invasion in *Ved*ic literature, and argue that these have not yielded any such finding.

A first category consists of old but still commonly repeated cases of circular reasoning, e.g. the assumption that the enemies encountered by the tribe with which the *Ved*ic poet identifies, are "aboriginals".[4] In fact, there is not one passage where the *Ved*ic authors describe such encounters in terms of "us invaders" vs. "them natives", even implicitly.

Among more recent attempts, motivated explicitly by the desire to counter the increasing skepticism regarding the Āryan invasion theory, the most precise endeavour to show up an explicit mention of the invasion turns out to be based on mistranslation. Michael Witzel tries to read a line from the "admittedly much later" *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* as attesting the Āryan invasion: "*Prān ayuh pravavrāja, tasyaite kurupañcāla kāśī-videhā ity, etad āyavam, pratyan amāvasus tasyaite gāndhārayas parshavo'rattā ity, etad āmāvasyam*" (BSS 18.44:397.9).[5] This is rendered by Witzel as: "*Ayu* went eastwards. His (people) are the *Kuru-Pañchāla* and the *Kāśi-Videha*. This is the *āyava* (migration). (His other people) stayed at home in the West. His people are the *Gandhari*, *Parśu* and *Aratta*. This is the *Amavasava* (group)."

This passage consists of two halves in parallel, and it is unlikely that in such a construction, the subject of the second half would remain unexpressed, and that terms containing contrastive information (like "migration" as opposed to the alleged non-migration of the other group) would remain unexpressed, all left for future scholars to fill in. It is more likely that a non-contrastive term representing an action indicated in both statements, is left unexpressed in the second: that exactly is the case with the verb *pravavrāja* "he went", meaning "*Ayu* went" and "*Amavasu* went". *Amavasu* is the subject of the second statement, but Witzel spirits the subject away, leaving the statement subjectless, and turns it

[4] E.g. in Ralph Griffith's translation *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, 1889 (Motilal Banarsidass reprint, Delhi 1991), still commonly used.

[5] Michael Witzel: "Rgvedic History", in G. Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, Berlin 1995, p. 321.

into a verb, "*amā vasu*", "stayed at home". To my knowledge *vasu* is not even a verb form.

In fact, the meaning of the sentence is really quite straightforward, and doesn't require supposing a lot of unexpressed subjects: "*Ayu* went east, his is the Yamunā-Gaṅgā region", while "*Amavasu* went west, his is Afghanistan, Parshu and West Panjab". Though the then location of "*Parshu*" (Persia?) is hard to decide, it is definitely a western country, along with the two others named, western from the viewpoint of a people settled near the Saraswatī river in what is now Haryana. Far from attesting an eastward movement into India, this text actually speaks of a westward movement towards Central Asia, coupled with a symmetrical eastward movement from India's demographic centre around the Saraswatī basin into the Gaṅgā basin. The fact that a world-class specialist has to content himself with a late text like the *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, and that he has to twist its meaning this much in order to get an invasionist story out of it, suggests that harvesting invasionist information in the oldest literature is very difficult indeed.

4.2.2 Iranians in the *Ṛg-Veda*

Aren't the references to Iranian tribes in the *Ṛg-Veda* proof of Central-Asian memories? Prof. Witzel claims that: "Taking a look at the data relating to the immigration of Indo-Āryans into South Asia, one is struck by a number of vague reminiscences of foreign localities and tribes in the *Ṛg-Veda*, in spite [of] repeated assertions to the contrary in the secondary literature." [6] But after this promising start, he fails to quote even a single one of those "vague reminiscences".

On the next page, however, Witzel does mention the ethnonyms of the enemies of the *Ved*ic Āryans, the *Dāsa*s (Iranian *Daha*, known to Greco-Roman authors as *Daai*, *Dahae*), *Dasyu*s (Iranian *dahyu*, "tribe", esp. hostile nomadic tribe) and *Panis* (Greek *Parnoi*), as unmistakably the names of Iranian tribes. The identification of these tribes as Iranian has been elaborated in the same volume by Asko Parpola, the Finnish author of a Dravidian reading of the Indus script. [7] The Iranian identity of *Dāsa*s and *Dasyu*s is now well-established, a development which should at least put an end to the talk of the *Dāsa*s being "the dark-skinned aboriginals enslaved by the Āryan invaders".

Unfortunately, Witzel and Parpola project their invasionist notions onto their discovery: they assume that the mentioning of Iranian tribes constitutes a "reminiscence" of the Indo-Āryan sojourn in Central Asia. This is in disregard of the explicit evidence of the geographical data given in the same *Ved*ic texts, which locate the interaction with the *Dāsa* s and *Dasyu*s in Panjab. From the identification of the *Dāsa*s and *Dasyu*s as Iranians, it could be deduced that these Iranian tribes have lived in India for a while. Of course, this inference might be explained away with the plea that a narrative transfer of geographical setting may have taken place, but that would be a purely external conjecture not supported

[6] Michael Witzel: "Rgvedic History", in G. Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 320.

[7] Asko Parpola: "The problem of the Aryans and the Soma", in G. Erdosy: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p-367.

by the *Ved*ic text itself.

Witzel makes much of the transfer of geographical names: *Saraswatī*, *Gomatī*, *Sarayū*, *Rasā* are the names of rivers in India as well as in Afghanistan.[8] This is well-known, but what does it prove? The *Ved*ic references to these rivers definitely concern the Indian rivers, not the Afghan ones, e.g. the *Ved*ic description of the Saraswatī as 'sea-going' does not apply to the Afghan *Harahvaitī* (the Iranian equivalent of Sanskrit Saraswatī), which, quite remarkably for a river, does not send its waters to the sea but to a small lake on the Iranian plateau. It is perfectly possible that the names were taken from the Indian metropolis to the Afghan country of emigrant settlement, rather than the other way around.

4.2.3 The south was on their right-hand side

Another philological argument which keeps on being repeated is the migration-related interpretation of the polysemy of ordinary terms of direction, e.g. *dakṣiṇa*: "south" and "right-hand side"; *pūrva*: "east" and "frontside", *paścima*: "west" and "backside". Since the equivalence of "south" with "right-hand side" presupposes an eastward orientation, it is assumed that this linguistic fact (along with its ritual application of carrying the fire eastward during the *Ved*ic *agnicayana* ceremony) "is connected with the eastward expansion of the *Ved*ic Indians through the plains north of the Ganges".[9]

Frits Staal elaborates: "In an early period, the *Ved*ic Āryans made their way, fighting, into the Indian subcontinent, from the West to the East, and carried the fire with them. In the *agni-praṇayana* rite, the fire is still carried from West to East." Mercifully, he adds that *Ved*ic ritual does not function as a commemoration of this invasion. With reference to a warlike hymn to *Indra*, still chanted in the course of the *agni-praṇayana* ritual, and off-hand interpreted as celebrating the Āryan invasion, he writes: "But the priests are not commemorating the conquests of their ancestors, of which they actually knew nothing. The function of the hymn has not changed, but has become ritual, i.e. it has lost its [meaning]."[10] If we understand this correctly, he means that the rite originally did celebrate the successful Āryan invasion, but that contemporary Brahmins, having forgotten the invasion history, keep on conducting the rite without realizing its origin.

This inference assumes that the *Ved*ic Āryans had impressed on such elementary items in their language as the term for the cardinal directions an association with an eastward movement which must have taken only a small part of their daily routine (even migrants are sedentary much of the time, producing or finding food and other necessities) and a relatively short span in their national history. Yet, though they impressed this invasion memory so deeply upon their language, they managed to forget it altogether, so that today,

[8]Michael Witzel: "Rgvedic History", in G. Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 321.

[9]Frits Staal: *Ritual and Mantras: Rules without Meaning*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1996 (1990), p. 154, and to the same effect, Frits Staal: *Zin en Onzin in Filosofire, Religie en Wetenschap*, Amsterdam 1986, p. 310.

[10]F. Staal: *Zin en Onzin*, p. 310

even the *Ved*ic ritual specialists have to learn the “true” meaning of their ritual from a big white professor from Berkeley.

Moreover, this explanation is contradicted by a study of similar polysemic terms in other languages. It is in fact very common to identify the “positive”, solar directions (east, south) with the front side, the “negative” directions (west, north) with the back side. Sometimes, the emphasis is on the north-south axis, e.g. in Chinese, where the character *bei*, “north”, is derived from the character for “backside”. Likewise, in Sanskrit, *uttara*, “north”, also means “last, final”, while in *Avesta*n, *paurva*, “frontside”, also means “south”.

Otherwise, the emphasis is on the east-west axis, as in Sanskrit *pūrva*, “east” and “frontside”. Thus, the old Hebrew word *yamīn* means both “right-hand side” and “south” (hence the country name Yemen, the “south” of the Arabian peninsula), this even though Abraham had made a westward journey from Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia to the Promised Land.[11] The same polysemy exists in some of the Celtic languages, which had also migrated westward from the central part to the western coasts of Europe. A standard history book of Mesopotamia reports about a Sumerian text: “Enheduana’s Temple Hymn addressing the temple of Enlil at Nippur, says: ‘On your right and left are Sumer and Akkad’. This reflects a long-lasting tradition that north is ‘left’ and south ‘right’”.[12] The very word orientation, from Latin, testifies to the natural tendency of taking the orient as the direction of reference.

The term *pūrva/paurva* is discussed further by I. M. Diakonov, who argues that *Avesta*n *paurva* means “forward, south”, while Sanskrit *pūrva* means “forward, east”, because the Proto-Iranians migrated to the south while the Proto-Indians migrated to the east.[13] One cannot deny that it sounds good, but it would only be convincing if he could also find a word meaning “forward, west” in a westbound IE protolanguage (say, Celtic). The point is that in practically all prescientific cosmologies, both south and east are “positive” (in Chinese: *yang*) or solar directions, associated with clarity and the front side, while both west and north are “negative” (in Chinese: *yin*) or lunar directions, associated with obscurity and the hidden side.

The word *pūrva* itself, spatially the opposite of *paścima*, “west”, is in its metaphorical temporal use, “earlier” (as in *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*, “earlier Veda hermeneutics”, ritualism), the opposite of *uttara* (as in *Uttara-Mīmāṃsā*, “later *Veda* hermeneutics”, monistic *Vedānta* metaphysics), which in its literal spatial sense means “north”. The distribution of the two positive directions over the words *pūrva/paurva* in Iranian and Indo-Āryan is therefore only superficially an opposition. The alternance south/east in the case of *paurva/pūrva* stems

[11] According to Langenscheidt’s Pocket Hebrew-English Dictionary, the word *yamīn* is translated as: “right side, right hand, the south; prosperity”. As for the latter meaning, cfr. the meaning of the derived Sanskrit word *dakṣiṇā*, viz. “(esp. teacher’s) fee”.

[12] J. N. Postgate: *Early Mesopotamia. Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*, Routledge, London 1992, p. 38.

[13] I. M. Diakonov: “On the Original Home of the Speakers of Indo-European”, *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, spring 1985, p-92-174, specifically p. 159.

from their common "positive" character. This has parallels elsewhere, e.g. Germanic east corresponds to Latin *Auster*, "south wind", both being related to Sanskrit *Uṣā*, Greek *Eos*, Latin *Aurora*, Germanic *Ostarra* (whence Eng. "Easter"), "dawn goddess", the common meaning being "light", "the direction of the light".

As for the orientation of the *Ved*ic *agnicayana* ritual, if this proves an eastward movement of the *Ved*ic ancestors, what shall we say about the rule that Christian churches are oriented towards the east, even though Christianity is not particularly associated with any eastward migration? The explanation of the ritual of carrying the fire to the east may be much simpler and of universal application: it symbolizes the underground night journey of the sun from the sunset west to the sunrise east. Here again, Staal's explanation of the West-East direction is an unnecessary superimposition of a specific (and unsubstantiated) historical connotation on a widespread practice of orientation.

Traditional Christian churches are directed to the East so that ideally, the light of the rising sun at Easter (i.e. spring equinox) falls on the consecrated wafer which the priest holds up; and so that at any rate the sunlight confers an aura upon the frontal part of the church interior. Of course, this was a christianized adaptation of a Pagan practice, preserved by Roman, Germanic and other "Āryans"; these nations have either not invaded their habitat from anywhere, or alternatively, according to the dominant theory, they (as well as the Christian religion) have invaded Europe in a westward movement from the east. Here again we find that the south sometimes alternates with the east: while most church buildings were directed east, the churches of the Knights Templar were directed south. And that, too, had nothing to do with any migration history apart from the sun's daily migration in the sky.

4.2.4 Geographical implications of *Ved*ic chronology

Sometimes, invasionist scholars miss the non-invasionist information which is staring them in the face. It is easy to establish on the basis of internal evidence (the genealogy of the composers and of the kings they mention) that the 8th *maṇḍala* of the *Ṛg-Veda* is one of the younger parts of the book. It is there (*Ṛg-Veda* 8:5, 8:46, 8:56) that we find clear reference to the material culture and fauna of Afghanistan, including camels. Michael Witzel duly notes all this, but fails to realize that the invasionist scenario requires that such references appear in the oldest part of the *Ṛg-Veda*.[14] What we now have is an indication that the movement went from inside India to the northwest, where Indian explorers and emigrants got acquainted with new scenery, new fauna and new ethnic groups.

Witzel makes a beginning with a long-overdue project: establishing the internal chronology of the *Ṛg-Veda* on the basis of internal cross-references between kings and poets of different generations.[15] Unfortunately, his first results are rather confused because he does not confine himself to the information actually given in the *Ṛg-Veda*, frequently bringing in

[14] Michael Witzel: "Rgvedic History", in G. Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 322.
[15] *ibid.* p. 324ff.

the "information" (actually conjecture) provided by modern theorists with their invasionist model. This is in fact a general tendency among academics trying to come to grips with the challenge to their trusted AIT-based models: even while evaluating non-AIT scenarios, they often relapse into AIT-derived assumptions.

By contrast, Shrikant Talageri's survey of the relative chronology of all *Ṛg-Ved*ic kings and poets has been based exclusively on the internal textual evidence, and yields a completely consistent chronology.[16] Its main finding is that the geographical gradient of *Ved* ic Āryan culture in its *Ṛg-Ved*ic stage is from east to west, with the eastern river Gaṅgā appearing a few times in the older passages (written by the oldest poets mentioning the oldest kings), and the western river Indus appearing in later parts of the book (written by descendents of the oldest poets mentioning descendents of the oldest kings).

The *status quaestionis* is still, more than ever, that the *Ved*ic corpus provides no reference to an immigration of the so-called *Ved*ic Āryans from Central Asia. This need not be taken as sufficient proof that such an invasion never took place, that Indo-Āryan was native to India, and that India is the homeland of the Indo-European language family. Perhaps such an invasion from a non-Indian homeland into India took place at a much earlier date, so that it was forgotten by the time of the composition of the *Ṛg-Veda*. But at least, such an "Āryan invasion" cannot be proven from the information provided by the *Ved*ic narrative itself.

4.3 WHERE DID THE KURGAN PEOPLE COME FROM?

4.3.1 Kurgan immigrants

From the east, a foreign IE-speaking population intruded into Europe, soon to be diluted by genetically mixing with the natives, and totally assimilated before they, or rather their language and culture, reached Europe's western shores. However, it stands to reason that they were still genetically distinct when their entry began. That is why the start of the Kurgan culture was accompanied by a change in the racial composition of the population of South Russia in about 4500 BC: "The Dniepr-Donets people are known to be massive Cro-Magnons, continuous from the Upper Palaeolithic; the Strednij Stog-2 men are described as more gracile, tall-statured, dolichocephalic with narrow faces."[17] And again, Maria Gimbutas writes: "The skeletal remains are dolichomesocranial, taller-statured and of a more gracile type than those of their predecessors in the substratum."[18]

It is this new racial element which the Kurgan Urheimat school identifies as IE. In that case, the cultural change was effected by an incoming new ethnic group. It is fair to observe that the racial type described here as typical of the first Kurgan-making community,

[16]Shrikant Talageri: *The Ṛg-Veda, a Historical Analysis*, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, forthcoming.

[17]Editorial note in *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1977/4, p-345.

[18]Marija Gimbutas: "Primary and Secondary Homeland of the Indo-Europeans", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1985/1-2, p. 191.

is similar to the tall, robust and long-headed type which you find in the Pashtu, Panjabi and Kashmiri populations of contemporary India and Pakistan, as also in the Harappan and pre-Harappan settlements.

But the two racial types coexisted for long, though still culturally distinct: "Kurgan II, ca. 4000-3500 BC. Materials from this period demonstrate continuous coexistence with the Dniepr-Donets culture: two different physical types (both of 'Cro-Magnon C' type, but with the Kurgan people being more gracile) and burial customs (collective burials in trenchlike pits characteristic of the Dniepr-Donets culture, and single burials of Kurgan type) were proved to be present even in the same villages." [19] This is precisely the type of coexistence which renders cultural assimilation and transmission of the IE language to pre-IE populations possible.

4.3.2 Eastern origins

While V. Gordon Childe, one of the first to identify South Russia as the Urheimat, thought that the Urheimat population and/or culture had come from more westerly regions, "Gimbutas, following most recent Russian work, has departed from Childe, to the extent of deriving the Kurgan cultures from the steppes on the Lower Volga and farther east (...) While linguistic opinion has been moving in the direction of putting the Indo-European homeland in the region of the Vistula, Oder or Elbe, archaeological opinion is now putting it in the Lower Volga steppe and regions east of the Caspian Sea." [20] This was written in 1966, when considerations of the geographical and linguistic location of "birch" and "beech", now quite outdated, were still tempting people to locate the Urheimat in Germany or Poland "on linguistic grounds".

Population geneticists like L. Cavalli-Sforza have also discerned an east-to-west migration through eastern Europe in ca. 4000 BC, and identified this westbound population with the bringers of the Indo-European languages. [21]

The archaeological evidence also indicates an abrupt change, suggesting an immigration, and more particularly an immigration from the east: "Local evolution cannot account for such abrupt changes (...) The pottery is relatable to the earliest Neolithic in the Middle

[19] M. Gimbutas: "Proto-Indo-European Culture: The Kurgan Culture during the Fifth, Fourth and Third Millennia BC", in Cardona at al., eds.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p. 178.

[20] Ward H. Goodenough: "The Evolution of Pastoralism and Indo-European Origins", in G. Cardona et al., eds.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p. 253-265, specially p. 255, with reference to V. Gordon Childe: *The Āryans. A Study of Indo-European Origins*, London 1926.

[21] A. J. Ammerman and L. L. Cavalli-Sforza: *The Neolithic Transition and the Genetics of Populations in Europe*, Princeton 1984, p. 59, and L. L. Cavalli-Sforza: *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, Princeton 1994, p. 108. Harald Haarmann: "Aspects of early Indo-European contacts with neighbouring cultures", *Indogermanische Forschungen* 1996, p. 12, tries to refute the theory of the geneticists by pointing out early linguistic contacts between IE and North-Caucasian as well as Uralic. In fact, North-Caucasian may easily have borrowed everything it has in common with IE rather than having imparted anything, while Uralic itself migrated from north-central Asia to eastern Europe.

Urals and Soviet Central Asia."[22] We already saw how the Kurgan people brought the cultivation of millet from Central Asia.[23] All in all, there is now a very strong case for an Asian origin, dated to before 4500 BC, of the Kurgan culture. Tracing these pre-Kurganites to India is a job yet to be done, but at present it should certainly be considered one the reasonable hypotheses.

Remark that in this section, I have only quoted findings which predate the ongoing AIT debate by years or by decades. All of them were published by established academic Indo-Europeanists. On respected platforms, all the necessary information had been made available to deduce an Asian origin of IE. Yet, so strong is the paradigm inertia that few if any established academics have intervened to draw that conclusion openly. Let us therefore add the more recent and more outspoken opinion of Bernard Sergent: "The present stage of research effectively permits tracing an Asian origin for the Indo-Europeans well before their dispersion."[24] Sergent affirms in so many words that "the Kurgan people had to originate in Central Asia"[25], and even that may have been a waystation en route from yet another country of origin.

4.4 THE HORSE EVIDENCE

4.4.1 The horse and IE expansion

Horses are prominent in the traditions of every known branch of the ancient Indo-Europeans. In 731 AD the Pope had to prohibit the consumption of horse meat in order to help the conversion effort among the horse-revering Germanic heathens, who used to ritually eat horse meat as consecrated food (*prasāda*) after the horse sacrifice. Horse domestication is commonly taken to have triggered the unprecedented Indo-European expansion, with a revolution in the lifestyle of the IE tribes (paralleled by the military, political and economic revolution which the horse caused among Native Americans in the 17th-18th century) as the first stage.

In Mesopotamia, horse trade made its appearance in about 2000 BC along with IE communities. The Sumerian sign for "horse" was apparently borrowed from Elamite, which was spoken on the northern (now Iranian) coast of the Persian Gulf, half-way between Sumer and the Indus Valley. Linguists have argued that the Sumerian word *si-si*, "known in Sumerian since the fourth millennium BC", and the derived Semitic words (Hebrew *sūs*), were borrowed from Indo-Iranian *aśva*, even though "the chronology has to be stretched to make this comparison acceptable".[26]

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[22]M. Gimbutas: "Primary and Secondary Homeland", *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1985, p. 191, emphasis added.

[23]B. Sergent: *Les Indo-Européens*, p. 398, p. 432.

[24]*ibid.* p. 62

[25]*ibid.* p. 440, with reference to Roland Menk: *Anthropologie du Néolithique Européen*, dissertation, Geneva, 1981

[26]The linguists arguing in favour of this IE-Sumerian connection are T. V. Gamkrelidze and V. V. Ivanov;

If we accept an Indian Urheimat, the chronological problem disappears: since *Ved*ic and related dialects of Old Indo-Āryan were spoken in the Indus basin in the 4th millennium BC, their term for "horse" may have been imparted to Sumerian in that very period.

But: according to the first archaeological surveys, there had been no horses in the Harappan cities. By contrast, plenty of horse remains have been found in Ukraine and South Russia, including bridle-scarred horse teeth dated to 4300 BC.[27] Is that not proof enough that horses are a foreign import into India, and that the momentous step of horse domestication was taken far outside India?

Even if there had not existed any horses in Harappan India, it would still be conceivable that Indians had domesticated the horse outside India. The idea of domestication may have been brought to the horse-rich steppes from a more advanced area where donkeys and oxen were already being used as beasts of burden or even to pull carts. It is often claimed that horses were first used for the same purpose before becoming mounts; other scholars reject this hypothesis, considering that bare-back riding is not much more difficult and dangerous than the whole process of harnessing a horse to a cart. But this makes little difference for our argument, among other reasons because both the horse and the wheeled cart are part of the common IE heritage, as shown by their presence in the common PIE vocabulary.

For an explanation of the Āryans' remarkable expansion, it is not necessary that they were the first to domesticate the horse; it is sufficient that they were the first to use the advantages of domesticated horses to the fullest. Compare: gunpowder was invented by the Chinese, but used to the best effect by the European colonizers, even in their confrontations with the Chinese. Nor is it necessary that they domesticated the horse before their expansion began.

No case should be built on eager but unconfirmed hypotheses that the horse was domesticated in India, but the more popular hypothesis that it was first domesticated in Central Asia or Eastern Europe will do just fine even for an Indian Urheimat hypothesis. The first wave of IE emigrants, in pre- or early *Ved*ic times, may have reached the Caspian Sea coasts and domesticated the horse there, or learnt from natives how to master the horse. They communicated the new knowledge along with a few specimens of the animal to their homeland (supposing it was indeed unknown or nearly unavailable in India itself), and along with the appropriate new terminology, so that it became part of the cultural scene depicted in *Ved*ic literature. Meanwhile, the IE pioneers on the Caspian Sea coast made good use of the horse to speed up their expansion into Europe.

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in reply to two Russian articles of theirs, I. M. Diakonov wrote: "On the Original Home of the Indo-Europeans", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, spring 1985, p. 92-174. The quotations are Diakonov's, p. 134.

[27]The story of horse domestication and its social effects is told by David Anthony, Dimitri Y. Telegin and Dorcas Brown: "The Origin of Horseback Riding", *Scientific American* 12/1991.

4.4.2 The absence of horse remains

The possibility of horse domestication inside India should not be dismissed too quickly: we insist that, in the presence of other types of evidence (the familiarity with domesticated horses literarily attested since the earliest *Ved*ic hymns), the seeming absence of archaeological evidence should not be treated as positive counter-evidence. For a striking example of the discrepancy between abundant reality and meagre archaeological testimony, let us not forget that the Harappan seal inscriptions have yielded only a few thousands of lines of text, though they are obviously the tip of an iceberg of a vast literary tradition.

Even stranger: there are practically no Leftovers of writing from the centuries between the abandonment of the Harappan cities and the Maurya empire, more than a thousand years during which numerous important works in Sanskrit and Prakrit were, shall we say, *composed*. Does this prove that writing was absent from India during those centuries (as has been claimed in all seriousness by accomplished scholars), and that the grammarians including Pāṇini had to do their path-breaking research without the aid of a literary corpus or written notes? Of course not: the inability of archaeologists to find Leftovers from what we *know* to be a highly literate stage of Indian civilization, simply proves that the archaeological record in India falls short of the historical reality to a vastly greater extent than in Egypt or West Asia. In the case of artefacts, this may be due to a greater availability of organic, perishable materials to build with or to write on. In the case of bodies, it is mostly cultural: unlike the Egyptians who embalmed their pharaohs as well as their *Apis* (bull-god) temple's sacred bulls, Indians had no inclination to preserve mortal entities for a day longer than their allotted life-span. For the rest, the most important factor is climatological, with India's damp heat leading to a faster decay of the available relics.

That the presence of horses in Harappa may well be out of proportion to the meagre archaeological testimony of horse bones, has unwittingly been confirmed by Marxist historian Romila Thapar. All while affirming that "the horse is an insignificant animal in the Indus cities", apparently referring to the paucity (but not absence) of horse bones in Harappan ruins, she neutralizes this oft-used argument for the non-Āryan character of Harappa by also telling us: "Excavated animal bones from Hastinapur in the first millennium BC when the use of horses was more frequent, indicate that horse bones make up only a very small percentage of the bones." [28] In today's India, cows are vastly more numerous than horses, as future archaeologists are bound to discover in their turn, yet on ceremonial occasions like army parades you get to see whole regiments of horses with riders but not a single cow. This, as archaeology has confirmed, was also the situation in Hastinapur: horses were rare in absolute figures, though very prominent on ritual occasions of the kind recorded in the vedas.

And likewise in *Ved*ic culture: "From the *Ved*ic texts onwards the horse is symbolic of nobility and is associated with people of status." [29] So, the *Ved*ic attention paid to horses

[28] Romila Thapar: "The Theory of Aryan Race and India", *Social Scientist*, January-March 1996, p. 21.
[29] *ibid.* p. 21

was quite out of proportion with their percentage in the domesticated animal population. Compared with Russia, India was relatively poor in horses, and on top of that, it was by far not as good in preserving what much of horse bones it had, for reasons outlined above. Therefore, the paucity of horse remains is only to be expected; it is not as strong an argument against "*Ved*ic Harappa" as it once seemed to be.

4.4.3 The presence of horse remains

Meanwhile, in several Harappan sites remains of horses have been found. Even supporters of the AIT have admitted that the horse was known in Mohenjo Daro, near the coast of the Arabian Sea (let alone in more northerly areas), in 2500 BC at the latest.[30] But the presence of horses and even domesticated horses has already been traced further back: horse teeth at Amri, on the Indus near Mohenjo Daro, and at Rana Ghundai on the Panjab-Baluchistan border have been dated to about 3,600 BC. The latter has been interpreted as indicating "horse-riding invaders"[31], but that is merely an application of invasionist preconceptions. More bones of the true and domesticated horse have been found in Harappa, Surkotada (all layers including the earliest), Kalibangan, Malvan and Ropar.[32] Recently, bones which were first taken to belong to onager specimens, have been identified as belonging to the, domesticated horse (Kuntasi, near the Gujarat coast, dated to 2300 BC). Superintending archaeologist Dr. A. M. Chitalwala comments: "We may have to ask whether the Āryans (...) could have been Harappans themselves. (...) We don't have to believe in the imports theory anymore."[33]

Admittedly, the presence of horses in the Harappan excavation sites is not as overwhelming in quantity as in the neolithic cultures of Eastern Europe. However, the relative paucity of horse remains is matched by the fact that the millions-strong population of the Harappan civilization, much larger than that of Egypt and Mesopotamia combined, has left us only several hundreds of skeletons, even when men sometimes had the benefit of burial which horses did not have.

The implication for the question of the horses is that any finds of horses are good enough to make the point that horses were known in India, and that they were available to a substantially greater extent than a simple count of the excavated bones would suggest. The cave paintings in Bhimbetka near Bhopal, perhaps 30,000 years old (but the datings of cave paintings are highly controversial), showing a horse being caught by humans, confirm that horses existed in India in spite of the paucity of skeletal remains.[34] There is, however,

[30] E .J. H. Mackay and A. D. Pusalker, quoted in Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, p. 118; see also K. D. Sethna: *KarpAsa*, p. 13-15.

[31] Cited in Harry H. Hicks & Robert N. Anderson: "Analysis of an Indo-European *Ved*ic Āryan Head, 4th Millennium BC", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, fall 1990, p. 425-446, specifically p. 437.

[32] S. P. Gupta: *The Lost Sarasvati and the Indus Civilization*, p. 193-196, with full references.

[33] Interviewed in: "Āryan civilization may become 'bone' of contention", *Indian Express*, 10/12/1995.

[34] These paintings have been reproduced in, among others, Klaus Klostermaier: *Survey of Hinduism*, p. 35.

room for debate on whether the animals depicted are really horses and not onagers. Other cave paintings, so far undated, show a number of warriors wielding sticks in their right hands and actually riding horses without saddles or bridles.[35]

The fact that both the Austro-Asiatic and the Dravidian language families have their own words for "horse" (e.g. Old Tamil *ivuḷi*, "wild horse", and *kutirai*, "domesticated horse") not borrowed from the language of the Āryans who are supposed to have brought the horse into India, should also carry some weight. Partly because of the uncongenial climate, horses must have been comparatively rare in India (as they would remain in later centuries, when Rajput forces were attacked by Turkish invaders with an invariably superior cavalry), but they were available.

The evidence concerning horses remains nonetheless the weakest point in the case for an Indian Urheimat. While the evidence is arguably not such that it proves the Harappan culture's unfamiliarity with horses, it cannot be claimed to prove the identity of *Ved*ic and Harappan culture either, the way the abundance of horse remains in Ukraine is used to prove the IE character of the settlements there. At this point, the centre-piece of the anti-AIT plea is an *explainable* paucity of the evidence material, so that everything remains possible.

This is true both at the level of physical evidence and on that of artistic testimony: the apparent absence of horse motifs on the Harappan seals (except one)[36] can certainly be explained, viz. by pointing at the equally remarkable absence of the female cow among the numerous animal depictions on the seals, even though the cow must have been very familiar to the Harappans considering the frequent depiction of the bull. A taboo on depictions of the two most sacred animals may well explain the absence of both the cow and the horse. However, it is obvious that a positive attestation of the horse on the Harappan seals would have served the non-invasionist cause much better.

4.5 VEDIC ARYANS IN WEST ASIA

4.5.1 The Kassite and Mitannic peoples

An important anomaly in the AIT is the presence of the Mitanni kings in northern Mesopotamia, with their *Ved*ic cultural heritage and language, as early as the 15^{th} century BC, with absolutely no indication that they Were "the Āryans on the way to India". In fact, the *Ved*ic memories appearing in the Mitanni texts were already remote, with only four *Ved*ic gods mentioned amid a long list of non-*Ved*ic gods. This does not in itself prove that the Mitanni dynasty was post-*Ved*ic, but it certainly confers the burden of proof on those who want to declare it pre-*Ved*ic.

Their language was mature Indo-Āryan, not proto-Indo-Iranian. Satya Swarup Misra argues that the Mitannic languages already showed early Middle-Indo-Āryan traits, e.g. the

[35] Dated to *la nuit des temps*, "the night of time", in *Science Illustrée*, May 1995.

[36] Reproduced in N. S. Rajaram: *From Harappa to Ayodhya*, inside the front page.

assimilation of dissimilar plosives (*sapta* > *satta*), and the break-up of consonant clusters by interpolation of vowels (anaptyxis, *Indra* > *Indara*).[37] This would imply that Middle-Indo-Āryan had developed a full millennium earlier than hitherto assumed, which in turn has implications for the chronology of the extant literature written in Middle-Indo-Āryan.

In the centuries before the Mitanni texts, there was a Kassite dynasty in Mesopotamia, from the 18th to the 16th century BC. Linguistically assimilated, they preserved some purely *Ved*ic names: *Shuriash*, *Maruttash*, *Inda-Bugash*, i.e. *Sūrya*, *Marut*, *Indra-Bhaga* (*Bhaga* meaning effectively "god", cfr. *Bhag-wān*, Slavic *Bog*).

The Kassite and Mitanni peoples were definitely considered as foreign invaders. They are latecomers in the history of the IE dispersal, appearing at a time when, leaving India out of the argument, at least the area from Iran to France was already IE. They have little bearing on the Urheimat question, but they have all the more relevance for mapping the history of the Indo-Iranian group.

Probably the Kassite and Mitannic tribes were part of the same migration, with the latter settling in a peripheral area and thereby retaining their identity a few centuries longer than the Kassites in the metropolitan area of Babylon. According to Babylonian sources, the Kassites came from the swampy area in what is now southern Iraq: unlike the Iranians, who migrated from India through Afghanistan, the Kassites must have come by sea from Sindh to southern Mesopotamia. While the Iranians migrated slowly, taking generations to take control gradually of the fertile areas to the south of the Aral Lake and of the Caspian Sea, the Kassites seem to have been a warrior group moving directly from India to Mesopotamia to carry out a planned invasion which immediately gave them control of the delta area, a bridgehead for further conquests of the Babylonian heartland. They were a conquering aristocracy, and having to marry native women, they lost their language within a few generations, just like the Vikings after their conquest of Normandy.

If the earlier Kassite and the later Mitanni people were indeed part of the same migration, their sudden appearance falls neatly into place if we connect them with the migration wave caused by the dessiccation of the Saraswatī area in ca. 2000 BC.

Indian-Mesopotamian connections relevant to the Urheimat question have to be sought in a much earlier period. Whether the country Aratta of the Sumerian sources is really to be identified with a part of the Harappan area, is uncertain; the Sumerian legend *Enmerkar* and the *Lord of Aratta* (late 3rd millennium BC) mentions that Aratta was the source of silver, gold and lapis lazuli, in exchange for grain which was transported not by ship but over land by donkeys; this would rather point to the mining centres in mountainous Afghanistan, arguably Harappan colonies but not the Harappan area itself. However, if this Aratta is the same as the Indian *AraTTa* (in West Panjab) after all, it has far-reaching implications. *AraTTa* is Prakrit for *A-rāṣṭra*, "without kingdom". The point here is not its meaning, but its almost Middle-Indo-Āryan shape. Like *sapta* becoming *satta* in the

[37] S. S. Misra: *The Aryan Problem*, p. 10. Of course, the data are to be handled with care, for the foreign script in which the Indo-Āryan words were rendered, may not have been phonologically accurate.

Mitannic text, it suggest that this stage of Indo-Āryan is much older than hitherto assumed, viz. earlier than 2000 BC.

4.5.2 The Sumerian connection

At the material high tide of the Harappan culture, Mesopotamia had trade contacts with Magan, the Makran coast west of the Indus delta, with Bad Imin, "the seven cities", and with Meluhha, the Indus valley. The name Meluhha is probably of Dravidian origin: Asko Parpola derives Meluhha, "to be read in the early documents with the alternative value as *Me-lah-ha*", from Dravidian *Met-akam*, "high abode/country" (with *mel/melu*, "high", being the etymon of Sanskrit *Meru*, the cosmic mountain).[38] Meluhha is the origin of Sanskrit *Mleccha*, Pali *Milakkhu*, "barbarian"[39]: because of the unrefined sounds of their Prakrit and because of their cultural impurity (whether by borrowing foreign elements or simply by an indigenous decay of existing cultural standards), the people of Sindh/Meluhha were considered barbarian by the elites of *Madhyadesh* (the Gaṅgā-Yamunā doab) during the Sūtra period, which non-invasionists date to the late 3rd millennium BC, precisely the period when Mesopotamia had a flourishing trade with Meluhha.

The search is on for common cultural motifs between the Harappan culture and Sumer. One element in literature which strikes the observer as meaningful, is this: according to the account given by the Babylonian priest Berosus, the Sumerians believed their civilization (writing and astronomy) had been brought to the Mesopotamian coast by sages, the first of whom was one *Uana-Adapa*, better known through his Greek name *Oannes*. He was a messenger of *Enki*, god of the Abyss, who was worshipped at the oldest Mesopotamian city of Eridu. Like the *Ved*ic "seven sages", meaning both the seven clans of *Ved*ic seers as well as the seven major stars of Ursa Maior, these seven sages are associated with the starry sky; like the *Matsya* incarnation of *Viḍṇu*, *Oannes*'s body is that of a fish. The myth of the Flood, wherein divine guidance helps the leader of mankind (Sumerian *Ziusudra*, Sanskrit *Manu*, Akkadian *Utnapishtim*, Hebrew *Noah*) to survive, is another well-known common cultural motif.

The antediluvian kings in Sumer are said by Berosus to have ruled for 120 periods of 3,600 years, or 432,000 years; epochs of 3600 years were in use among Indian astronomers, and the mega-era of 432,000 is equally familiar in India as the scripturally estimated (inexact) number of syllables in the *Ṛg-Veda*, and as the "high" interpretation of the length of the *Kali-Yuga*.[40] Rather than being a late borrowing, this number 432,000 may well be

[38] Asko Parpola: "Interpreting the Indus Script", in A. H. Dani: *Indus Civilisation: New Perspectives*, p. 117-132, specifically p. 121.

[39] V. S. Pathak ("Semantics of Arya", in S. B. Deo & S. Kamath: *The Aryan Problem*, p. 93) derives the modern ethnic term *Baluch* from *Bloch* (< *Blukh* < *Mlukh*) < *Meluhha*. This is very unlikely, if only because the Baluchis have immigrated into this area from Western Iran during the early Muslim period. Before that, in most of the areas where Pashtu and Baluchi are now spoken, the language was Indo-Āryan Prakrit.

[40] Discussed in Ivan Verheyden: "Het begon met Oannes", Bres (Antwerp), May 1976. Strictly, Kali-Yuga

part of the common IE heritage. At least implicitly, it was present in Germanic mythology, which developed separately from Hindu mythology for several millennia before Berosus (ca. 300 BC): 800 men at each of the 540 gates of Wodan's palace makes for a total of 432,000. This does not prove any far-fetched claim that "the gods were cosmonauts" or so, but it does show that early Indo-European had a world view involving advanced arithmetic (Sanskrit being the first and for many centuries the only language with terms for "astronomical" numbers), and that they shared some of it with neighbouring cultures.

We may be confident that a deeper search, more alert to specifically Indian contributions than is now common among sumerologists, will reveal more connections. Through the Hittites, Philistines (i.e. the "Sea Peoples" originating on the Aegean coasts and settling on the Egyptian and Gaza coasts in ca. 1200 BC), Mitannians and Kassites, elements of IE culture were known throughout West Asia. Even ancient Israelite culture was culturally much more Indo-European than certain race theorists would like to believe.

4.6 MEMORY OF THE URHEIMAT

4.6.1 Poetry vs. history

The *Veda*s do not preserve any veneration, not even any mention, of an Urheimat. Compare this with the Torah (the first five books of the Bible): edited in about the 6th century BC, it gives a central place to Moses' exodus from Egypt in about 1200 BC, and of Abraham from "Ur of the Chaldees" in about 1600 BC. Similarly, in the 16th century, the Aztecs in Mexico still preserved the memory of Aztlan (probably Utah), the country from which they migrated in the 12th century. Postulating that the *Ved*ic people kept silent about a homeland which they still vividly remembered, as the invasionists imply, is not coherent with all we know about ancient peoples, who preserved such memories for many centuries.

Admittedly, the *Veda*s are a defective source of history. As religious books, they only deal with historical data in passing. But that has never kept the invasionist school from treating the *Veda*s as the only source of ancient Indian history, to the neglect of the legitimate history books, the *Itihāsa-Purāṇa* literature, i.e. the Epics and the *Purāṇa*s. It is like ignoring the historical Bible books (Exodus, Joshua, Chronicles, Kings) to draw ancient Israelite history exclusively from the Psalms, or like ignoring the historians Livius, Tacitus and Suetonius to do Roman history on the basis of the poet Virgil. What would be dismissed as "utterly ridiculous" in Western history is standard practice in Indian history.

Essentially the same remark was already made by *Purāṇ*ic scholar F. E. Pargiter.[41] It was dismissed by some, with the remark that the *Purāṇa*s are even more religious and unhistorical than the *Veda*s.[42] However, that does injustice to the strictly historical parts

is to last for 1,200 years, but since "a year among men is but a day among the gods", scribes have magnified the number to 360 x 1,200 = 432,000.

[41] F. E. Pargiter: *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, London 1922, p.v.

[42] A. K. Majumdar: *Concise History of Ancient India*, Delhi 1977, p. 89, and D. K. Ganguly who quotes

of the *Purāṇa*s, mixed though they are with religious lore. No serious historian would ignore the Exodus narrative simply because it also contains unhistorical episodes like the Parting of the Sea and the voice from the Burning Bush.

Experience should also make us skeptical towards the knee-jerk skepticism displayed by historians when confronted with ancient historiography. Thus, the king-list of the Chinese Shang dynasty (16th-12th century BC) was dismissed as "obviously mythical", but when in the 1920s the Shang oracle bones were discovered, all the kings were found to be mentioned there: the "mythical" dynastic list proved to be correct to the detail. Likewise, the first Bible historians were skeptical of Biblical history, e.g. of the "obviously wildly exaggerated" description of the huge city of Niniveh; but then archaeologists discovered the ruins of Niniveh, and found that the Bible editors had been fairly accurate in their description.

The Bible provides another important parallel with the Epics and *Purāṇa*s: most historians now accept the basic historicity of the Biblical account of Israelite political history from at least king David until the Exile, yet it is almost completely unattested in non-Biblical documents, just as ancient Indian history as narrated in the Epics and *Purāṇa*s (and glimpsed in the *Veda*s) is practically unattested in non-Indic literature. The non-attestation of Israel's history in the writings of its highly literate neighbours is more anomalous than the non-attestation of early Indian history in the writings of other literate cultures, which were more distant from India geographically and linguistically than Babylon was from Jerusalem. So, if Biblical history can be accepted as more than fantasy, the same credit should be given to the historiographical parts of the Epics and *Purāṇa*s.

4.6.2 Value of the *Purāṇa*s

In spite of the low esteem in which they are held, the *Purāṇa*s are essentially good history. More than 30 years ago, P. L. Bhargava has already demonstrated that the dynastic lists which form the backbone of *Purāṇ*ic history cannot be dismissed as legend or propaganda.[43] His first argument is that the oldest names of kings, though mostly Indo-Āryan, are often of a different type (e.g. absence or paucity of theophoric names, like in ancient Greek or Germanic) than those common at the time of the *Purāṇ*ic editors, who show their unfamiliarity with the obsolete names by sometimes misspelling or misinterpreting them. This would not be the case if they had made them up.

Secondly, against those who think that court historians may have concocted genealogies and ancient claims to the land for their royal patrons, Bhargava points out that the

him approvingly: *History and Historians in Ancient India*, p. 30.

[43]Bhargava: *India in the Vedic Age*, p-139-140. Not that I recommend Bhargava's book as an introduction to the *Purāṇ*ic history, for it imposes grossly arbitrary "corrections" on the geographical data so as to fit them into a kind of Invasionist framework. He is a mild example of the school which claims that *Purāṇ*ic history actually took place alright, but in Central Asia or thereabouts rather than in India; and that *Purāṇ* ic historians simply transferred it to an Indian setting. As if an American were to write national history by transferring the Battle of Hastings and the War of the Roses from a British to an American setting.

*Purāṇa*s do not locate any dynasties in those areas which are reasonably assumed to have been non-Āryan originally but which were dominated by Indo-Āryan dynasties (or Dravidian-speaking dynasties claiming an "Āryan" ancestry) at the time of the *Purana* editors, e.g. parts of Bihar, the east coast (*Utkala*, *Kalinga*, *Chola*), and the south (*Pandya*, Kerala): "This clearly means that the lists are all genuine and the later *Purāṇ*ic editors, in spite of their failings, never went to the extent of interspersing imaginary genealogies with genuine ones."[44]

The argument is similar to one of Irving Zeitlin's arguments for the authenticity of the Biblical account of the conquest of Palestine by the Israelites.[45] Zeitlin shows that the land conquered by Joshua according to the Biblical narrative did not coincide with the Promised Land as promised by Jahweh to Joshua (it falls short of the promised area while also comprising some non-promised territory); a purely propagandistic narrative intent on legitimizing the later extent of the Israelite kingdom or on glorifying Jahweh's reliability, would have made Joshua acquire the exact territory promised by the Lord.

Thirdly, many names from the *Purāṇ*ic lists also show up in other sources, including the Epics, the Jain *Agama*s, the *Sūtra*s, and earliest of all, the *Veda*s. Of course, persons are sometimes shown in a rather different light in different sources, and there are differences on details between the different *Purāṇa*s as well as between the *Purāṇa*s and the other sources; but that is exactly what happens when authentic events (such as a traffic accident) are related by different witnesses.

4.6.3 Dynastic history in the *Purāṇa*s

Shrikant Talageri takes up the argument where Bhargava had left it, and proceeds to demonstrate that the fragmentary *Ved*ic data and the systematic *Purāṇ*ic account tally rather splendidly.[46] The *Purāṇa*s relate a westward movement of a branch of the *Aila/Saudyumna* clan or Lunar dynasty from Prayāg (Allahabad, at the junction of Gaṅgā and Yamunā) to *Sapta Saindhavah*, the land of the seven rivers. There, the tribe splits into five, after the five sons of the conqueror *Yayāti*: *Yadu*, *Druhyu*, *Anu*, Puru, *Turvaśu.* All the rulers mentioned in the *Veda*s either belong to the Paurava (Puru-descended) tribe settled on the banks of the Saraswatī, or have come in contact with them according to the *Purāṇ*ic account, whether by alliance and matrimony or by war. Later, the Pauravas (and minor dynasties springing from them) extend their power eastward, into and across their ancestral territory, and the *Ved*ic traditions spread along with the economic and political

[44] *ibid.* p. 139

[45] Irving M. Zeitlin: *Ancient Judaism*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1991 (1984), ch.4, particularly p. 125ff. Zeitlin's thesis is that the Biblical account of the conquest is quite factual. The thesis is controversial not because actual discoveries plead against it, but because it is ideologically uncomfortable. After the Holocaust, it is painful to accept the Biblical account because what it describes is a genocide in the full sense of the term, eliminating all the men, women and children of the conquered parts of Canaan. Liberal theologians of Judaism and Christianity would greatly prefer a more peaceful version.

[46] Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, p. 304ff.

influence of the metropolitan Saraswatī-based Paurava people.

This way, the eastward expansion of the *Ved*ic horizon, which has often been read as proof of a western origin of the Āryans, is integrated into a larger history. The *Ved*ic people are shown as merely one branch of an existing Āryan culture, originally spanning northern India (at least) from eastern Uttar Pradesh to Panjab. The approximate and relative chronology provided by the dynastic lists allow us to estimate the time of those events as much earlier than the heyday and end of the Harappan cities.

*Purāṇ*ic history reaches back beyond the starting date of the composition of the *Veda*s. In the king-lists, a number of kings are enumerated before the first kings appear who are also mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda*. In what remains of the *Purāṇa*s, no absolute chronology is added to the list, but from Greek visitors to ancient India, we get the entirely plausible information such a chronology did exist. To be precise, the *Purāṇ*ic king-list as known to Greek visitors of Chandragupta's court in the 4th century BC or to later Greco-Roman India-watchers, started in 6776 BC.[47] Even for that early pre-*Ved*ic period, there is no hint of any immigration.

4.6.4 Emigrations in the *Purāṇa*s

What is more: the *Purāṇa*s mention several *emigrations*. The oldest one explicitly described is by groups belonging to the Afghanistan-based *Druhyu* branch of the *Aila/Saudyumna* people, i.e. the Pauravas' cousins, in the pre-*Ved*ic or early *Ved*ic period. They are said to have moved to distant lands and set up kingdoms there. Estimating our way through the dynastic (relative) chronology given in the *Purāṇa*s, we could situate this emigration in the 5th millennium BC. It is not asserted that that was the earliest such emigration: the genealogy starts with *Manu*'s ten successors, of whom six disappear from the *Purāṇ*ic horizon at once, while two others also recede to the background after a few generations; and many acts of peripheral tribes and dynasties, including their emigration, may have gone unnoticed. But even if it were the earliest emigration, it is not far removed from a realistic chronology for the dispersion of the different branches of the IE family. It also tallies well with the start of the Kurgan culture by Asian immigrants in ca. 4500 BC.

Later, the *Anava*s are said to have invaded Panjab from their habitat in Kashmir, and to have been defeated and expelled by the Pauravas in the so-called Battle of the Ten Kings, described in *Ṛg-Veda* 7:18,19,33,83. The ten tribes allied against king *Sudas* (who belonged to the *Tṛtsu* branch of the Paurava tribe) have been enumerated in the *Ved*ic references to the actual battle, and a number of them are unmistakably Iranian: *Paktha* (*Pashtu*), *Bhalāna* (*Bolan*/Baluch), *Parśu* (Persian), *Pṛthu* (Parthian), the others being less recognizable: *Vishāṇin*, *Alīna*, *Śiva*, *Śimyu*, *Bhṛgu*, *Druhyu*. At the same time, they are (except for the *Druhyu*s) collectively called "Anu's sons", in striking agreement with the *Purāṇ*ic account of an Anava struggle against the Paurava natives of Panjab. Not mentioned in the *Ved*ic account, but mentioned in the *Purāṇ*ic account as the *Anava* tribe

[47] Pliny: *Naturalis Historia* 6:59; Arrian: *Indica* 9:9.

settled farthest west in Panjab (most removed from the war theatre), is the Madra (Mede?) tribe.

Talageri tentatively identifies the other tribes as well: the *Druhyu* as the Druids or Celts (untenable)[48]; the *Bhrgu*s as the Phrygians (etymologically reasonable); the *AlIna*s as the Hellenes or Greeks (shaky); the *Shimyu*s with the *Sirmio*s/*Srem*s or ancient Albanians (possible), etc. It is hard to prove or disprove this; all we can say is that along with the Iranian tribes, there may have been several non-Iranian tribes who emigrated from northwestern India after the Battle of the Ten Kings.

More migrations are attested, of individuals, families as well as whole tribes. The *Ved* ic character *Sarama* calls on the *Panis* to go far away and to the north; assuming that the *Panis* are not some kind of heavenly creatures, this presupposes that the northward exit was a well-known route, and perhaps a common trail for exiles, outlaws and refugees (just as in the colonial period, an Englishman who had lost all perspectives in his homeland could always move to Australia).[49] *Viśvāmitra*'s sons, fifty in number, dissented from their father and left the country, after which they are called *udantyah*, "those of the northern border".[50] A group of *Asura*s are said to have fled across the northern border, chased by *Agni* and the *Deva*s, who mounted guard there.[51]

4.6.5 Migration history of other IE tribes

Other branches of IE have a clear migration history, even if no literary record has been preserved. It is commonly accepted that the Celtic and Italic peoples were invaders into their classical habitats. The Celts' itinerary can be archaeologically traced back to Slovakia and Hungary, and Germany still preserves some Celtic place-names.[52] In France, Spain, and the British Isles, a large pre-IE population existed, comprising at least two distinct language families. Of the Iberian languages, only a few written fragments have been preserved. Etruscan is extinct but well-attested and fully deciphered, though we don't

[48]The etymology of Druid is as follows: *do-ro-vid*, i.e. Celtic *do*, "very", plus *ro* (from **pro*, as in Latin, cfr. Sanskrit *pra*), "very", plus IE *vid*, "know", hence "very very knowing". For a full discussion, see Françoise Le Roux & Christian-J. Christian-J. Guyonvarch : *Les Druides*, Editions Ouest-France, Rennes 1986, appendix 1.

[49]*Ṛg-Veda* 10:108:11.

[50]*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 33:6:1. My attention was drawn to this passage by L. N. Renu: *Indian Ancestors of Vedic Aryans*, p. 28.

[51]*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1:2:4:10. Thanks again to L. N. Renu: *Indian Ancestors*, p. 31-32. Renu also draws attention to a type of evidence which we cannot elaborate on: the continuity between the four-syllable folk-metre which is mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 4:3:2:7 as "prevalent earlier" (before being reduplicated to the standard eight-syllable metric unit of *Ved*ic verse) and which according to Renu (p. 24) "belongs to the pre-*Saṃhitā* days" but is "still popular amongst the tribal folk in India". Continuity between tribal and *Ved*ic culture is one of the most important demonstranda for non-AIT theorists.

[52]It is claimed that the Druids had a tradition tracing their own origins "to Asia in 3903 BC", quoted for what it is worth in Harry H. Hicks & Robert N. Anderson: "Analysis of an Indo-European *Ved*ic Āryan head - 4th millennium BC", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, fall 1990, p. 426, from W. Morgan: *St. Paul in Britain*, published in 1860.

know what to make of the persistent claims that it was a wayward branch of the IE Anatolian family. The Basque language survives till today, but attempts to link it to distant languages remain unsuccessful. At any rate, this area witnessed a classic case of IE expansion, resulting in the near-complete celtization or latinization of western and southern Europe.

Germanic, Baltic and Slavic cover those areas of Europe which have been claimed as the Urheimat: Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, South Russia. In the case of the Germanic peoples, there is no literary record (but plenty of archaeological indications) of an immigration, nor of the replacement or assimilation of an earlier population. The Baltic language group, represented today by Latvian and Lithuanian, once covered a slightly larger area than today, but there is no literary memory of a migration from another area. However, many Balts today will tell you that they originally came from India. Before this is declared to be an argument for an Indian Urheimat, it should be verified that this belief really pre-dates the 19^{th} century, when it was the prevalent theory among scholars throughout Europe. The folklore avidly recorded by nationalist philologists in the 19^{th} century could well contain not only age-old oral traditions of the common people but also some beliefs fashionable among those who recorded them. The Slavic peoples have expanded to the southwest across the Danube, and in recent centuries also (back?) to the east, across the Ural mountains. The farthest in time that human memory can reach, Ukraine and southern Poland seem to have been the Slavs' homeland.

When scholars from the Germanic, Baltic and Slavic countries started claiming their own country as the IE Urheimat, this certainly was not in contradiction with facts known at the time. But these Urheimat claims were only based on a weak *argumentum e silentio*: the first written records of these peoples are comparatively recent, several millennia younger than the break-up of PIE, and the true story of their migratory origins has simply been lost. This is not to deny that they may have preserved traditions of their own migrations for as long as the Israelites, but apart from the erosion wrought by time, it is christianization which has generally put a stop to the continuation of the traditional tribal knowledge. And where Christian monks stepped in to collect and preserve remnants of the national heritage (as in Ireland), it was too late: stories had gotten mixed up, the people who remembered the traditional knowledge were dying out, the thread had become too thin not to be broken,

That the Greeks took their classical habitat from an Old European population is not in doubt, but there is no definite memory of their immigration. Perhaps the myth of the Argonauts and the Golden Fleece, located in Georgia, should be read as a vague indication of a Greek migration from there, overseas to Thracia, whence the Greek tribes entered Greece proper in succession. But an actual immigration narrative is missing.

4.6.6 Iranian Urheimat memory

The one branch of IE which has preserved a relatively unambiguous record of its migration, is Iranian. The Iranians once controlled a much larger territory than today, after the Slavic

and Turkic expansions. The Cimmerians and Scythians spread out over the steppes between Ukraine and the Pamir mountains; of this branch of the Iranians, only the Ossets in the northern Caucasus remain. The Sogdians in the Jaxartes or Syr Darya valley and even as far east as Khotan (Xinjiang) made important contributions to culture and especially to Buddhist tradition. An unsuspected wayward branch of the Iranian family is the Croat people: till the early Christian era, when they were spotted in what is now Eastern Europe, they spoke an Iranian language, which was gradually replaced by Slavic "Serbo-Croat". They call themselves *Hrvat*, apparently from Harahvaiti, the name of a river in Western Afghanistan, which is merely the Iranian form of Saraswatī. In an Achaemenid inscription, the *Harahvaita* tribe is mentioned as one of the tribute-paying components of the Iranian empire. The migration of the Croats from Afghanistan to the western Balkan (and likewise, that of the *Alan*s, a name evolved from *Ārya*, as far west as France) could be the perfect illustration of the general cast-to-west movement which the Indian Urheimat hypothesis implies.

The Iranians are fairly clear about their history of immigration from Ĥapta-Hendu and *Airyanam Vaejo*, two of sixteen Iranian lands mentioned in the Zoroastrian scripture *Vendidad*. To the extent that they are recognizable, all sixteen are in Bactria, Afghanistan or northwestern India. Iran proper is not m the picture, nor is the Volga region whence the Iranians are assumed to have migrated m the AIT. Their religious reformer Zarathushtra, whom modern scholarship dates to the mid-2nd millennium BC, lived in present-day Balkh in Afghanistan, then a more domesticated land than today.[53] Afghanistan was a half-way station in a slow migration from India. The Iranians may have brought the name of the lost Saraswatī river along with them and given it, in the phonetically evolved form *Harahvaiti*, to a river in their new country; similarly with the name Sarayū, the river flowing through Ayodhyā, becoming *Harayu*, the old name of another river in western Afghanistan.

The Iranian homelands *Airyanam Vaejo*, described as too cold in its 10-months-long winter, and *Hapta-Hendu*, described as rendered too hot for men (i.e. the Iranians) by the wicked *Angra-Mainyu*, are Kashmir and *Sapta-Saindhavah* (Panjab-Haryana) respectively.[54] They are considered as the first two of sixteen countries successively allotted to the Iranians, the rest being the areas where the Iranians have effectively been living in proto-historical times. This scenario tallies quite exactly with the *Ved*ic and *Purāṇ*ic data about the history of the *Anavas*, one of the five branches of the *Aila/Saudyumna* people: from Kashmir, they invaded *Sapta-Saindhavah*, but were defeated by the Paurava branch (which composed the *Ṛg-Veda*) and driven northwestward.

[53] *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia* (p. 15) puts him in the period 1450-1200 BC, others go as far back as 1800 BC. It is to be kept in mind, however, that this dating is partly based on the AIT, including the assumption that Zarathushtra must be roughly contemporaneous with the *Veda*s. It is also disputed that the *Gāthā*s were written by Zarathushtra: just as the Torah was attributed to Moses but written much after his death, the *Gāthā*s may have been written long after Zarathushtra.

[54] In the Zoroastrian evil spirit's name *Angra-Mainyu*, later *Ahriman*, we can recognize the names *Angiras*, one of the principal clans of *Ved*ic seers, and *Manyu*, "intention", one of the names of *Indra*, and addressed in *Ṛg-Veda* 10:83-84. Coincidence?

Those who deny this scenario have had to invent a second "land of seven rivers" as the common Indo-Iranian homeland, from which the Iranians' *Ved*ic cousins took the name but not the memory into India; or to interpret the *Avesta*n river-name *Ranha* (correlate of Sanskrit *Rasā*, the *Purāṇ*ic name of the Amu Darya or Oxus) as meaning the Volga. [55]E.g. Jean Haudry: *Les Indo-Européens*, p. 118. Remark that in other contexts, *Rasā* can also mean the Narmada river, and also the mythical river which surrounds the world. Oxus and Narmada were apparently the borderline rivers of the Indus-Saraswatī civilization. It is a safe rule of scientific method that "entities are not to be multiplied without necessity" (Occam's razor), and therefore, until proof of the contrary, we should accept that the term *Sapta Saindhavah* and its Iranian evolute *Hapta Hendu* refer to the same region historically known by that name. Both Indian and Iranian sources situate the break-up between Indians and Iranians, *Deva*- and *Asura*-worshippers, in *Sapta-Saindhavah*. Before such a concordant testimony of all parties concerned, it is quite pretentious to claim that one knows it all better, and that they separated in Iran or Central Asia instead.

The balance-sheet is that some branches of the IE family have no memory of any migration, some have vague memories of their own immigration into their historical habitat, the Iranian branch has a distinct memory of migration from India to Iran, and only the Indian branch has a record of emigration of others from its own habitat.

4.6.7 *Rāma* in the *Avesta*?

In India, it is sometimes claimed that the *Avesta* contains the names of the Hindu hero *Rāma* and of his guru *Vasiṣṭha*. This was suggested by among others, Prof. Sukumar Sen and *Illustrated Weekly* journalist O. K. Ghosh, who tried to use this hypothesis as "proof" that *Rāma* could not have been born in Ayodhyā, locus of a Hindu-Muslim controversy involving *Rāma*'s birthplaces.[56] The word *rāma* appears in *Avesta*n, e.g. thrice in Zarathushtra's *Gāthā*s (29:10, 47:3, 53:8), but apparently only in its proper sense ("joyful, pleasant, peaceful", whence the derivative *ā-rām*, till today the Persian and Urdu word for "rest"). This means that it is not referring to the name of an individual called *Rāma*, whether *Rāmachandra* son of *Daśaratha* or another. The same is true in the even older *Yaśna Gāthā*s and in the much younger Pehlevi writings (Denkart, Vendidad), where derivatives of the root *rām* appear in their proper sense.

There does exist a royal name *Rāmateja*, carried by at least two kings of Media in the 8th-7th centuries BC (unless this form is Indic rather than Iranian, which could be explained as a late remainder of the Indic Mitanni presence in the same area which later became Media, or today's Kurdistan). In the regular Zarathushtrian prayer, *Rām* is seemingly used as a personal name: every day of the month is dedicated to one of the *ferishta*s, sort of angels (the *Amesha Spenta*s or aspects of *Ahura Mazda*, and their *hamkar*s or co-

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[56]O K. Ghosh: "Was Rama an Iranian?", *Illustrated Weekly of India*, 27-2-1993, with reference to Sukumar Sen: *Rām Itihāśer Prāk-kathan* (Bengali: "Introduction to the History of Rām")

workers) who are personifications (*yazad*s) of values, e.g. *Bahram* (<< *Vṛtraghna*) is the *yazad* of victory, *Ashtad* of rectitude etc., and *Rām* is the *yazad* of joy, invoked in prayer on the 21st day of the month. Though used as a personal name, this instance too may have nothing to do with the *Rāma* from Ayodhyā.

In the oldest *Avesta*n texts, the word *vahishta* also appears, the equivalent of *Vasiṣṭha*, but this again probably not as a personal name, but rather in its proper sense of "the best" (whence *behesht*, "he best [state]", paradise). That at least is the view of accomplished iranologists.[57] Admittedly, translating the ancientmost Iranian texts is even trickier than the already difficult *Veda*s, but I have as yet no reasons to insist on a different translation than the established one.

Prof. Sukumar Sen and his translator (for *The Illustrated Weekly*). O. K. Ghosh, found it useful to interpret *Avesta*n *rāma* and *vahishta* as personal names because they thought it would confirm the Āryan invasion theory, by putting all the *Rāmāyaṇa* characters and places in Iran-Afghanistan. Others think that it would rather confirm the Indian origin of the Iranians, giving them a memory of the indisputably Indian characters *Rāma* and *Vasiṣṭha*. I think that either explanation is possible once the reading of *Rāma* and *Vasiṣṭha* as personal names is accepted. Therefore, nothing is lost if we return to the non-personal reading.

4.7 INDRA AND ŚIVA

4.7.1 *Indra* stands accused

A central *Ved*ic myth is the killing of the dragon or snake, *Vṛtra*, by the *Ved*ic thunder god *Indra*. Here is a beautiful occasion to demonize *Ved*ic religion to its core, considering that "the duel between *Indra* and *Vṛtra*, officially the symbol of the eternal fight between good and evil, is the central element of the *Ved*ic sacrificial rite."[58] For Dravidianist agitators and other anti-Brahmin writers, the central *Ved*ic myth of the dragon-slayer is but an allegorical report of the Āryan invasion and defeat of the pre-Āryan natives, a commemoration of an ancient crime against humanity.[59]

In reality, the slaying of the dragon is a pan-IE myth, attested even in the remote Germanic tradition, where it was later christianized into Saint George's and Archangel Michael's dragon-slayings. In Iranian this dragon-slayer is actually called *Verethraghna*, a form eroded in Armenian to *Veragn* (remark that while the rejection of *Indra* was a central concern of Zarathushtra, *Indra*'s epithet *Verethraghna* remained as a separate deity in the

[57] My thanks to Prof. Wociech Skalmowski, who teaches Persian and Iranian at Catholic University, Leuven.

[58] André van Lysebeth: *Tantra*, p. 25.

[59] A very elaborate interpretation of the whole *Ṛg-Veda* as a report on the destruction of the Harappan "Asura Empire" by the Āryan invaders is Malati Shendge: *The Civilized Demons. The Harappans in Ṛg-Veda*.

Avesta). Obviously, the Iranians and Armenians did not have a history of conquering North-India from the Harappans, as per the AIT itself, so we may safely assume that the *Vṛtra* myth has nothing to do with an Āryan-Harappan war.

Nor is there any evidence that there ever was any war between Āryans and Harappans in the first place. No large-scale destruction of Harappan cities has been noticed. Contrast this with the IE expansion in the Balkans. From linguistic evidence, we understand that the Hellenes (Greeks) along with the Illyrians and Thracians supplanted or absorbed a highly civilized non-IE native population, whose culture is known as the *VinCa culture* (after its richest excavation site near Belgrade). These natives had used an as yet undeciphered writing system reportedly going back to 5300 BC, and disappearing along with the Old European culture in about 3500 BC. So there it really was an advanced civilization being overrun by barbarian invaders who largely destroyed it.

That model is being projected onto the *Ved*ic-Harappan history: a literate urban and agricultural civilization being overrun by semi-nomadic horsemen. But the crucial difference is that in the Balkans, this violent scenario is attested by archaeological findings: "The existence of archaeologically attested burnt layers at many settlements is evidence for military confrontations between the native farmers of Southeast Europe and the cattle-breeding nomads from South Russia." [60] The same thing happened when, according to most specialists, the Greeks entered mainland Greece in 1,900 BC, driving the last remains of Old European culture to their last refuge on Crete: "numerous destructions", "widespread destruction on the mainland, but no destruction on Crete or the islands". [61] This testimony of many settlements having been burnt down is absent at the Harappan sites.

All the same, a whole superstructure of invasionist readings of Indian symbols and mythology has been erected on the invasionist suspicion that, in Sir Mortimer Wheeler's famous words, "*Indra* stands accused" of destroying the Harappan civilization.

4.7.2 Continuity between *Indra* and *Śiva*

Once *Indra* had been identified by the AIT as a deified tribal leader of the invaders, an antagonism was elaborated between the "Āryan" sky-god *Indra* and the "pre-Āryan" fertility god *Śiva*; *Indra* being the winner of the initial military confrontation, but *Śiva* having the last laugh by gradually winning over the conquerors to the cult of the subdued natives. As I heard a Catholic priest from Kerala claim, "*Śiva* is not a Hindu god, because he is the god of the pre-Āryans."

That *Śiva* was the god of the Harappans, is based on a single Harappan finding, the so-called *Paśupati* seal. It depicts a man with a strange headwear sitting in lotus posture and surrounded by animals. Though not well visible, he seems to have three faces, which may mean that he is a three-faced god (like the famous three-faced *Śiva* sculpture in the

[60] Harald Haarmann: *Universalgeschichte der Schrift*, p. 80.

[61] William F. Wyatt, jr.: "The Indo-Europeanization of Greece", in Cardona et al., eds.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p. 89-111, specifically p-93.

Elephanta cave), or that he is a four-faced god with the back face undepictable on a two-dimensional surface. The common speculation is that this is *Śiva* in his *Paśupati* ("lord of beasts") aspect. Ever since the discovery of the Gundestrup cauldron in Central Europe, which depicts the Celtic horned god Cernunnos similarly seated between animals, this *Paśupati* seal is actually an argument in favour of the IE character of Harappan culture.

Let us, nevertheless, go with the common opinion: *Śiva* for the Harappans, *Indra* for the Āryans. Those who see it this way have never explained why the dominant Āryans have, over the centuries, abandoned their victorious god (*Indra* is practically not worshipped in any of the temples manned by Brahminical priests) in favour of the god of their defeated enemies. At any rate, when we study these two divine characters, we find that they are not all that antagonistic.

Śiva is usually identified with the *Ved*ic god *Rudra*. It so happens that *Indra*'s and *Rudra*'s domains are more or less the same: both are thundering sky gods. In mythology, *Indra* is, like *Śiva*, a bit of an outsider, who is in conflict with the other gods, shunned by them (and even by his mother), left alone by them to fight the Dragon, doing things that disrupt the world order. Christians who picture Jesus as the friend of the outcasts, may like to know that the despised "Āryan racist god" *Indra* is in fact on the side of the outcasts: "*Indra*, you lifted up the outcast who was oppressed, you glorified the blind and the lame." (*Ṛg-Veda* 2:13:12) As David Frawley has shown, *Indra* has many epithets and attributes which were later associated with *Śiva*: the *dispeller of fear*, the *lord of māyā* (enchantment), the *bull*, the *dancer*, the *destroyer of cities* (*Indra purandara*, *Śiva tripura-hara*).[62] Both are associated with mountains, rivers, male fertility, fierceness, fearlessness, warfare, transgression of established mores, the *Aum* sound, the Supreme Self.

Śiva and *Indra* are both associated with intoxication. *Indra* is praised as having a tremendous appetite for the psychedelic *soma* juice. *Śiva* has *Soma-Śiva* as one of his aspects, a name containing one of those Brahminical etymology games: *Soma* is the *Ved*ic intoxicant, and also the moon (as in *Somwār*, "Monday"), which is part of *Śiva*'s iconography (hence his, epithet *Somanātha*).

The now-popular theory that *Śiva* is a non-*Ved*ic and anti-*Ved*ic god, is partly based on the *Purāṇ*ic story of the destruction of *Dakṣa*'s sacrifice. *Dakṣa* is the father of *Śiva*'s beloved *Sati*: he rebukes *Śiva*, *Sati* commits suicide, and *Śiva* vents his anger by disturbing the sacrifice which *Dakṣa* is conducting. *Dakṣa* refuses to worship *Śiva* because *Śiva* is *vedabāhya*, "outside the *Veda*s"; as in a fit of anger, mortals also call their relatives all kinds of inaccurate names.

As David Frawley shows, the *Dakṣa* story is quite parallel to the *Ved*ic story of *Indra* stealing the *soma* from *Tvashtṛ* and even killing the latter, and to the *Ved*ic story of *Rudra* killing *Prajāpati*. In each case, a god who disrupts or "destroys" the world order, is seen to defeat a god representing the process of creation, which is equated with the process of the *Ved*ic sacrifice (the Creator creates the world by sacrificing). The destroyer-god, himself

[62] D. Frawley: *Gods, Sages and Kings*, p. 224-225, and in more detail: *Arise Arjuna*, p. 170-181.

a cornerstone of the created world, disrupts the creative sacrifice. David Frawley restores these stories to their traditional metaphysical interpretation: "Both *Indra*'s and *Śiva*'s role of destroying *Prajāpati* or his son relate to their role as eternity (absolute time) destroying time or the year (relative time) represented by *Prajāpati* and the sacrifice."[63] Personally, I prefer the more physical explanation given by Bal Gangdhar Tilak and in consonance with modern insights into mythology, viz. that the victory of the one god over the other may simply refer to the replacement of one constellation by the next as the stellar location of the equinox.

The outsider role of *Śiva* in the *Purāṇ*ic pantheon is the continuation of *Indra*'s role in the *Ved*ic pantheon, which in turn is only the Indian version of a role which exists in the other IE pantheons as well, e.g. the Germanic fire god *Loki* or the Greco-Roman warrior-god *Ares/Mars*. *Śiva* also continues *Indra*'s role of warrior-god. Till today, many *Śiva* sadhus are proficient in the martial arts. The Śaiva war-cry *Hara Hara Mahadev* is still used by some regiments of the Indian army as well as by Hindu demonstrators during communal confrontations.[64]

Finally, *śiva*, "the auspicious one", is an epithet of not only *Rudra* but of *Ved*ic gods in general. *Indra* himself is called *śiva* several times (*Ṛg-Veda* 2:20:3, 6:45:17, 8:93:3). *Śiva* is by no means a non-*Ved*ic god, and *Indra* never really disappeared from popular Hinduism but lives on under another name.

4.8 INVASIONIST TERMS IN THE *VEDA*S

4.8.1 *Dāsa*

Though not a pandit or philologist, Dalit leader Dr. Ambedkar took the trouble of verifying the meaning and context, in every single instance, of the *Ved*ic terms which Western scholars often mentioned as proof of a conflict between white Āryan invaders and dark non-Āryan aboriginals.[65] His line of argument has been elaborated further by V. S. Pathak and Shrikant Talageri.[66]

Among the *Ved*ic terms figuring prominently in the AIT reading of the *Veda*s, the most important one is probably *dāsa*. *Dāsa*, known to mean "slave, servant" in classical Sanskrit,

[63]D. Frawley: *Arise Arjuna*, p. 177. The symbolism of eternity and time is very clear in the iconography of *Śiva*'s consort *Kāli*. Representing all-devouring time, she dances on *Śiva*'s unconscious body: the world of change and destruction exists and affects us as long as the timeless self-consciousness of the Self has not awoken.

[64]In the *Chanakya* TV-serial, broadcast in truncated version on Doordarshan in 1992, the *Hara Hara Mahadev* sequences were censored out for fear that they might arouse communal passions.

[65]Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.1, p. 16-22 (from his *Caste in India*), p. 49 (from his *Annihilation of Caste*); p. 74-85 (from his *Who Were the Shudras?*), p. 301-303 (from his *The Untouchables*). I have discussed these passages in K. Elst: *Dr. Ambedkar, A True Aryan*, Voice of India, Delhi 1994, p. 15-23.

[66]V. S. Pathak: "Semantics of Arya": Its Historical Implications", in S. B. Deo & Suryanath Kamath: *The Aryan Problem*, p. 86-99; S. Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory*, p. 226-254.

but in the *Ṛg-Veda* the name of an enemy tribe, along with the apparently related word *dasyu*, is interpreted in AIT parlance as "aboriginal". More probably these words designate the *Ved*ic people's white-skinned n cousins, who at one point became their enemies, for both terms exist in Iranian, *dahae* being one of the Iranian tribes, and *dahyu* meaning "tribe, nation". The original meaning of *dāsa*, long preserved in the Khotanese dialect of Iranian, is "man"; it is used in this sense in the *Ved*ic names *Divodās*, "divine man" and *Sudās*, "good man".[67] In Iranian, it always preserved its neutral or positive meaning, it is only in late-*Ved*ic that it acquired a hostile and ultimately a degrading connotation. Strangely a similar evolution has taken place in Greek, where *doulos*, "slave", is an evolute of **doselos*, from **dos-*, the IE root of *dāsa*.

The post-*Ved*ic evolution in meaning from an ethnic name to "servant" does not necessarily point to enslavement of enemies; no military event of such nature and relating to the word, *dāsa* is mentioned in the *Ved*ic literature. Instead of seeing the *Ved*ic people as warriors, we may see them as a prosperous merchant population which at some stage, in a perfectly normal economic development, attracted the inflow of neighbouring populations as guestworkers willing to do the menial work, the way the Biblical twelve sons of Jacob went to Egypt of their own free will, where their children became a class of menial workers. But it is admittedly just as likely that the evolution was from "enemy" through "captive" to "slave". Whatever the scenario of their social degradation may have been, nothing in the *Ved*ic text shows that the *Dāsa*s were dark, nor that they were aboriginals as opposed to invaders.

4.8.2 *Asura*

Asura is the original Indo-Iranian and *Ved*ic term for "Lord", a form of address both for the gods and for people of rank. The late- and post-*Ved*ic concept of *Devāsurasaṃgrāma*, usually translated as "war between *Deva*s/gods and *Asura*s/demons", has led to the notion that this represents a war between two categories of gods, comparable to the Germanic *Aesir* and *Wanir*, or to the warring Gods and Titans of Greek mythology. However, there never existed a separate category of celestial beings called *Asura*s; the *Deva*s themselves were originally addressed as *Asura*.

At this point, we have to give credit to the invasionists for identifying the *Devāsurasaṃ grāma* as essentially a political struggle between two nations using their respective religious terminology as a banner. However, the *Asura*-worshippers, or *Asura*s for short, are not the non-Āryan aboriginals of whom we merely assume that they must have worshipped *Asura*; they are the nation known to worship *Asura*, or in their own dialect *Ahura* (epithet *Mazda*, so "wise Lord"), the usual Iranian term for the *Ved*ic god *Varuṇa*, god of the cosmic order and the truth (*ṛta*/*arta*).

The religious difference between Iranians and *Ved*ic "fire-worshippers" was a minor difference in emphasis, and had nothing to do with the causes of their conflict. It was

[67] See V. S. Pathak: "Semantics of Arya", in Deo & Kamath, *The Aryan Problem*, p. 91-95.

only after a war over the control of prize territory in the Panjab erupted, that the term *Asura* got identified with the aggression of the Kashmir-based *Anava*/Iranian people against the Paurava/*Ved*ic heartland in *Sapta-Saindhavah*, and acquired a negative, anti-*Ved*ic or anti-*Deva* meaning. Conversely, it must have been on that same occasion that the Iranians turned *Deva/Daeva* into a term for "demon".

4.8.3 Speech defects

Mṛdhravāk, "of harsh speech", could refer to hecklers mocking the *Ved*ic rituals, more or less "blasphemers". Usually it is interpreted as "speaking a foreign language", though that is not its literal meaning; and even if correct, this could still refer to another IE language or dialect. Scornful references to other people's languages are more often about closely related ones, cfr. the many English expressions pejoratively using the word "Dutch", the language of England's enemies in the 17th century, but nonetheless also the language which is (except for Frisian) the most closely akin to English.

Anāsa is interpreted as *a-nāsa*, "noseless", stretched to mean "snub-nosed"; but classical commentators analysed it, just as credibly, as *an-āsa*, "speechless" (*āsa* being the regular cognate of Latin *os*, "mouth"). This type of anthropomorphic imagery is often used in the *Veda*s for characterizing natural elements, e.g. fire as "footless". If referring to people, it is to be remarked that few Indians even among the tribals are snub-nosed. If taken to mean "speechless", hence perhaps "unintellegible", the same remark is valid as in the case of *mṛdhravāk*: unintellegibility is most striking when hearing someone speaking a dialect of your own language, i.e. when he was expected to be intelligible in the first place.

Nevertheless, it stands to reason that the *Ved*ic people have encountered enemies on some occasions, that some of these enemies did speak a completely different language, that *Ved*ic hymns were composed in preparation or commemoration of the battle, and that the enemies were mentioned in the hymns along with their strange language as their most distinctive trait. So, let us assume that the above terms do refer to people speaking a non-IE language. That would not at all be proof of an Āryan invasion, because both parties may be native, or the non-IE-speaking party may be the invading one. When the Germans invaded France in 1870, 1914 and 1940, the French duly noted that the German language was full of "harsh" sounds; even so, it was the *mṛdhravāk* Germans who were the invaders.

4.8.4 Black

Kṛṣṇayoni ("from a black womb"), *kṛṣṇatvac* ("black-skinned"), *tvacamasiknīm* (id.), *asiknīviśaḥ* ("black tribe") and other composites involving "black", read in their contexts, usually refer to darkness, to nightly stratagems in war, or metaphorically to evil. Most languages have expressions like "black deeds", "dark portends", "the dark age", associating darkness with evil, ignorance or danger. *Ved*ic Sanskrit is extremely rich in metaphors, in techno-scientific contexts (for lack of a separate technical jargon) as well as in cultural and religious con-

texts, e.g. the word *go*, "cow" can refer to Mother Earth, the sunshine, material wealth, language, the *Aum* sound, etc. It is not far-fetched to perceive a metaphorical intention behind the use of words like "black", similar to that in other languages.

It also has to be inspected case by case whether the reference is at all to human beings (whether skin-colour or figurative characterization), because many *Ved*ic expressions are about gods and heavenly phenomena. When it is said that *Agni*, the fire, "puts the dark demons to flight", one should keep in mind that the darkness was thought to be filled with ghosts or ghouls, so that making light frees the atmosphere of their presence. And when *Uṣā*, the dawn, is said to chase the "dark skin" or "the black monster" away, it obviously refers to the cover of nightly darkness over the surface of the earth.[68]

The term *varṇa* is understood in classical Sanskrit as "colour". This is then explained as referring to the symbolic colours attributed to the three cosmological "qualities" (*guṇa*): white corresponds to *sattva* (clarity), red to *rajas* (energy) and black to *tamas* (darkness), following the pattern of daylight, twilight and nightly darkness. Likewise, the different functions in the social spectrum are allotted a member of the colour spectrum: the menial (*tāmasika*) Śūdras are symbolically "black", the heroic (*rājasika*) Kṣhatriyas are "red", and the truth-loving (*sāttvika*) Brahmins are "white"; in addition, the entrepreneurial Vaiyśas are considered to have a mixture of qualities, and are allotted the colour yellow. This sense of "colour" has nothing to do with skin colour, as should also be evident from the ancient use of the same colour code among the all-white Germanic peoples.

Moreover, "Colour" might even not be the original, *Ved*ic meaning of *varṇa*. Reformist Hindus eager to disentangle the institution of *varṇa* from any doctrines of genetic determinism, derive it from the root *var-*, "choose" (as in *svayamvara*, "[a girl's] own choice [of a husband]"), with the implication that one's *varṇa* is not a matter of birth but of personal choice. This seems to tally with Stanley Insler's rendering, in his classic translation of *The Gāthā s of Zarathushtra*, of the corresponding *Avesta*n term *varanā* as "preference" (which other translators sometimes stretch to mean "conviction", "religious affiliation"). But we believe that the root meaning is even simpler.

In the *Ṛg-Veda*, the word *varṇa* usually (17 out of 22 times) refers to the "lustre" (i.e. "one's own typical light", a meaning obviously related to "colour") of specified gods: *Uṣa*, *Agni*, *Soma*, etc.[69] As for the remaining cases, in 3:34:5 and 9:71:2 it indicates the lustrous colour of the sky at dawn. In 1:104:2 and 2:12:4, reference is only to quelling the *varṇa* of the *Dāsa*s, - meaning "the *Dāsa*s' luster" (in the first case, Ralph Griffith translates it as "the fury of the *Dāsa*"). Finally, in the erotic *Ṛg-Ved*ic hymn 4:179, verse 6, where *Agastya*, in doing the needful with his wife *Lopamudra* to obtain progeny, is said to satisfy "both *varṇas*", this is understood by some as referring quite plainly to the two families of husband and wife, who rejoice in the arrival of a grandchild. Since the hymn

[68]This is admitted in so many words by Sir M. Monier-Williams in his *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, entry *tvac*. Reference is to *Ṛg-Veda* 1:92:5 and 4:51:9.

[69]As pointed out by Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7, p. 82. It should be kept in mind that gods were primarily identified with stars and their "lustre".

mentions the conflict between sexuality and asceticism, others interpret it as meaning "both paths (of worldliness and world-renunciation)". At any rate, there is simply no question of reading a racist meaning into it.

Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, let us assume that some of the above references to "colour" or "blackness" are really about dark-skinned neighbouring tribes. That would still not prove that the lighter-skinned people were invaders. At the same latitude and in essentially the same climate, the people of Mesopotamia are predominantly white; the presence of whitish people in northwestern India can be explained by the same factors as their presence in Mesopotamia, and does not require an invasion. Nor would it prove that the *Ved*ic Āryans were racists: there is not the slightest hint anywhere in the vast *Ved*ic literature that "dark-skinned" tribes were treated as enemies *because* of their skin colour, that there existed a doctrine of inequality by skin colour. It is only said that these "demons" disrupted the worship of the gods, so that the Āryans had to defend their culture against them.

When read in their specific *Ved*ic contexts, the terms which we have just discussed do not fit the "white Āryans attack black *Dāsa*s" scenario at all. Most conflicts hinted at in the *Veda*s and described in the *Purāṇa*s are between different Āryan tribes and kings. A closer reading of the ancientmost Indian writings reveals a total absence of any immigration stories. In fact, even if there had been mention of a struggle between "whites" and "blacks", this would still not be proof of an immigration. From Pashtunistan and Kashmir southeastwards, skin colour changes fast from nearly white to nearly black; to a race-conscious observer, a war between two tribes could therefore easily look like a war between "whites" and "blacks", even when neither tribe had invaded the Indian subcontinent from outside.

4.9 THE EVIDENCE FROM PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

4.9.1 Continuity between castes

Half a century ago, Dr. Ambedkar surveyed the existing data on the physical anthropology of the different castes in his book *The Untouchables*. He found that the received wisdom of a racial basis of caste was not supported by the data, e.g.: "The table for Bengal shows that the Chandal who stands sixth in the scheme of social precedence and whose touch pollutes, is not much differentiated from the Brahmin (...) In Bombay the Deshastha Brahmin bears a closer affinity to the Son-Koli, a fisherman caste, than to his own compeer, the Chitpavan Brahmin. The Mahar, the Untouchable of the Maraṭha region, comes next together with the Kunbi, the peasant. They follow in order the Shenvi Brahmin, the Nagar Brahmin and the high-caste Maraṭha. These results (...) mean that there is no

correspondence between social gradation and physical differentiation in Bombay."[70]

A remarkable case of differentiation in skull and nose indexes, noted by Dr. Ambedkar, was found to exist between the Brahmin and the (untouchable) Chamar of Uttar Pradesh.[71] But this does not prove that Brahmins are foreigners, because the data for the U. P. Brahmin were found to be very close to those for the Khattri and the untouchable Chuhra of Panjab. If the U. P. Brahmin is indeed "foreign" to U.P., he is by no means foreign to India, at least not more than the Panjab untouchables. This confirms the scenario which we can derive from the *Ved*ic and *Itihāsa-Purāṇa* literature: the *Ved*ic tradition was brought east from the *Ved*ic heartland by Brahmins who were physically indistinguishable from the lower castes there, when the heartland in Panjab-Haryana at its apogee exported its culture to the whole *Āryavarta* (comparable to the planned importation of Brahmins into Bengal and the South around the turn of the Christian era). These were just two of the numerous intra-Indian migrations of caste groups.

Recent research has not refuted Ambedkar's views. A press report on a recent anthropological survey led by Kumar Suresh Singh explains: "English anthropologists contended that the upper castes of India belonged to the Caucasian race and the rest drew their origin from Australoid types. The survey has revealed this to be a myth. 'Biologically and linguistically, we are very mixed', says Suresh Singh (. . .) The report says that the people of India have more genes in common, and also share a large number of morphological traits. 'There is much greater homogenization in terms of morphological and genetic traits at the regional level', says the report. For example, the Brahmins of Tamil Nadu (esp. Iyengars) share more traits with non-Brahmins in the state than with fellow Brahmins in western or northern India. (. . .) The sons-of-the-soil theory also stands demolished. The Anthropological Survey of India has found no community in India that can't remember having migrated from some other part of the country."[72] Internal migration accounts for much of India's complex ethnic landscape, while there is no evidence of a separate or foreign origin for the upper castes.

Among other scientists who reject the identification of caste (*varṇa*) with race on physical-anthropological grounds, we may cite Kailash C. Malhotra:

"Detailed anthropometric surveys carried out among the people of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal and Tamil Nadu revealed significant regional differences within a caste and a closer resemblance between castes of different *varṇa*s within a region than between sub-populations of the caste from different regions. On the basis of analysis of stature, cephalic and nasal index, H. K. Rakshit (1966) concludes that "the Brahmins of India are heterogeneous and suggest incorporation of more than one physical type involving more than one migration of people".

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[70] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7, p. 301.

[71] Dr. Ambedkar: *Writings and Speeches*, vol.7, p. 301, with reference to G. S. Ghurye: *Caste and Race on India*, London 1932.

[72] N. V. Subramaniam: "The way we are. An ASI project shatters some entrenched myths", *Sunday*, 10-4-1994.

"A more detailed study among eight Brahmin castes in Maharashtra on whom 18 metric, 16 scopic and 8 genetic markers were studied, revealed not only a great heterogeneity in both morphological and genetic characteristics but also showed that 3 Brahmin castes were closer to non-Brahmin castes than [to the] other Brahmin castes. P. P. Majumdar and K. C. Malhotra (1974) observed a great deal of heterogeneity with respect to OAB blood group system among 50 Brahmin samples spread over 11 Indian states. The evidence thus suggests that *varṇa* is a sociological and not a homogeneous biological entity." [73]

4.9.2 Family traits

This general rejection of the racial basis of caste does not exclude that specific castes stand out in their environment by their phenotypical or genotypical characteristics. Firstly, any group that goes on breeding endogamously for generations will have "family traits" recognizable to the regular and sharp observer, at least to a statistically significant extent. This does not mean that these family traits (rarely distinctive enough to be called "racial" traits) are in any way the *reason why* one caste refuses to intermarry with another caste, as you would have in the case of racial discrimination.

Secondly, intra-Indian migrations have taken place so that certain caste groups stand out by retaining the physical characteristics of their source region's population for quite a few generations. Thus, the Muslim invasions chased some Rajput castes from western India to the Nepalese borderland, and some Sāraswat Brahminsfrom Kashmir to the Konkan region; geneticists ought to be able to find traces of that history.

It is well-known that the Brahmin communities of Bengal and South India originated in the physical importation of Brahmin families by kings who sought accession to the prestigious *Ved*ic civilization and wanted to give extra religious legitimacy to their thrones. These Brahmin families were brought in from northwestern India where, for obvious geographical reason, people are whiter and closer to the European physical type than in Bengal or the South. (Even so, due to intermarriage and the incorporation of local priesthoods, numerous Brahmins in South India are simply black.) Apart from Brahmins, numerous other caste groups throughout India have histories of immigration, putting them in environments where they differed in genetic profile from their neighbours, e.g. the Dravidian-speaking Oraon tribals of Chotanagpur recall having migrated from Maharashtra along the Narmada river.

The Chitpavan Brahmins of Maharashtra are often mentioned as a caste that stands out by its physical type. Their slightly more "Nordic" build and the occurrence of blue eyes among them look like the perfect evidence for the theory that the Brahmins are the descendents of the Nordic Āryans who invaded India in 1500 BC. In fact, it is only during

[73]K. C. Malhotra: "Biological Dimensions to Ethnicity and caste in India", in K. S. Singh: *Ethnicity, Caste and People*, Manohar, Delhi 1992, p. 65. Reference is to H. K. Rakshit: "An Anthropometric Study of the Brahmins of India", in *Man in India* #46; and P. P. Majumdar & K. C. Malhotra: *OAB Dynamics in India: A Statistical Study*, Calcutta 1974.

the initial Islamic onslaught that the Chitpavans migrated from the Afghan borderland to their present habitat.

Nevertheless, the Chitpavan case shows that sometimes, such distinctive family traits do coincide with the difference between the higher or lower incidence of the distinctive traits of the white race, esp. the low pigmentation of the skin or, in this case, the eyes. The difference between castes can in some cases be expressed in terms of the respective distances between their average characteristics and those of the European type. And this is only to be expected given the basic fact that India is a large country with great variation in physical type and lying in the border zone between the major races. The rich biological variety in the Indian chapter of the human species is due to many factors, but so far the Āryan Invasion has not been shown to be one of them.

4.9.3 Mixing of castes

The genetic differential between castes has recently been confirmed in a survey in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.[74] The main finding of the survey, conducted by human-geneticists Lynn B. Jorde (University of Utah) and Bhaskara B. Rao and J. M. Naidu (both with Andhra University), concerned the role of inter-caste marriages: men stay in their castes, while women sometimes go and live with a man from another, mostly higher caste. In spite of the definition of caste as an "endogamous group", the fact is that there has always been a marginal mixing of castes as well. Likewise, even outside the marital framework, upper-class employers (in any society) have made passes at their maid-servants, while prostitutes got impregnated by their higher-class clients, all producing mixed offspring.

Factoring all these marginal mixed-caste births in, the cumulative effect over centuries is that the castes have mixed much more than the theory of caste would lead you to expect. Over many generations, this mixing had to lead to a thorough genetic kinship even between castes of very divergent origins. Given these known sociological facts, the scientists naturally found that genetic traits in the male line (Y chromosome) are stable, those in the female line (mitochondrial DNA) considerably less so. Because inter-caste marriages are mostly between "neighbouring" castes in the hierarchy, the genetic distance between highest and lowest is about one and a half times greater than that between high and middle or between middle and low.

However, none of this requires a policy of racial discrimination nor an Āryan invasion into India: the known history of internal migrations and the general facts about relations between higher and lower classes in all societies can easily account for it.[75] Moreover,

[74]Pallava Bagla: "Study shows caste system has changed genetic makeup of Hindus. Studying 200 men in A. P., Indo-US team finds that lower castes have over the years become 'genetically different' from upper castes", *Indian Express*, 18-10-1998. See also the subsequent critical editorial: "Questionable enterprises. DNA and caste can make a deadly combination", *Indian Express*, 22-10-1998, which points out that the study merely confirm what observers of caste relations had known all along.

[75]Thus, Kancha Ilaiah (*Why I Am Not a Hindu*, Samya/Bhatkal & Sen, Calcutta 1996) offers a description of the differences in life style between upper castes and Śūdras, with the declared intention of getting the

the observed differences between Indian communities are much smaller than those between Indians collectively and Europeans (or Africans etc.) collectively. A provisional table of the genetic distance between populations shows that North-Indians and South-Indians are indeed very close, much closer than "Āryan" North-Indians and "Āryan" Iranians are to each other.[76]

Both sides in the debate should realize that this evidence can cut both ways. If an Āryan or other invasion is assumed, this evidence shows that all castes are biologically the progeny of both invaders and natives, though perhaps in different proportions. Conversely, if the genetic distance between two castes is small, this still leaves open the possibility that the castes or their communal identities can nonetheless have divergent origins, even foreign versus native, although these are obscured to the geneticist by centuries of caste mixing.

4.9.4 Tribals and "Caucasians"

The one important general difference between two parts of the population is that between a number of tribes on the one hand, and some other tribes plus the non-tribals on the other. V. Bhalla's mapping of genetic traits shows that the latter category roughly belongs to the Mediterranean subgroup of the Caucasian race (though by the superficial criterion of skin colour, it can differ widely from the type found in Italy or Greece). incidentally, the term Caucasian as meaning the white race was coined in 1795 by the German scientist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who believed that the Caucasus region, particularly Georgia, "produces the most beautiful human race", and that it was the most likely habitat of "the autochthonous, most original forms of mankind".[77] Thus, the typically Caucasian Rhesus-negative factor is "conspicuous by its absence" in the Mongoloid populations of India's northeast, but the non-tribal populations "show a moderately high frequency of 15% to 20% but not as high as in Europe" of this genetic trait.[78]

Bhalla lists a number of specific genes which are characteristically strong or weak in given racial types, and finds that they do define certain ethnic sub-groups of India, esp. the Mongoloid tribals of the northeast, the Negritos of the Andaman Islands, and the Australoids in the remaining tribal pockets of the south. Everywhere else, including in many tribal areas, the Mediterranean type is predominant, but the present battery of genetic markers was not able to distinguish between subtypes within this population, much less to indicate different waves of entry.

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reader indignated at the injustice and absurdity of the typically Hindu castle system. Yet, his testimony unwittingly shows just how similar Hindu caste inequality is to the social inequality in other societies, e.g. Ilaiah's repeated observation that women are more controlled in upper castes and more assertive and free in lower castes is or was just as true for Confucian China or the feudal and bourgeois societies of Europe.

[76] Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza: "Genes, Peoples and Languages", *Scientific American*, November 1991.

[77] Quoted in Simon Rozendaal: "*Ras - wat is dat eigenlijk?*", Elsevier, 14-10-1995.

[78] V. Bhalla: "Aspects of Gene Geography and Ethnic Diversity of the People of India", in K. S. Singh: *Ethnicity, Caste and People*, p. 51-60; specifically p. 58.

In fact, no "entry" of these Mediterranean Caucasians can be derived from the data, certainly not for the post-Harappan period. According to an older study, they were present even in South India in 2,000 BC at the latest: "The evidence of two racial types, the Mediterranean and the Autochthonous proto-Australoid, recognized in the study of the skeletal remains from the neolithic levels at Brahmagiri, Piklihal, Tekkalakota, Nevasa etc., seems to suggest that there was a thick population consisting mainly of these two races in South India around 2000 BC."[79]

The Caucasian race was present in India (like in Europe and the Kurgan area) since hoary antiquity. Kailash Malhotra reports, starting with their geographical spread today: "The Caucasoids are found practically all over the country, though the preferred habitats have been river valleys and plains."[80]

In the past, the Caucasian presence was also in evidence: "Although a large number of prehistoric sites have been excavated in India, only a few of them have yielded human osseous remains (...) None of the pre-Mesolithic sites have yielded skeletal material; the earliest remains are around 8,000 years old. An examination of the morphological features of skeletons from sites of the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic and iron age periods reveals the presence of Australoids and Caucasoids in all the periods, the absence of Mongoloids, and the existence of at least two types of Caucasoids, the dolichocephals and the brachycephals (...) The skeletal evidence thus clearly establishes the presence of Australoids and Caucasoids in India for at least 8,000 years."[81]

All that can be said, is that the population of India's northeast is akin to that of areas to India's north and east, that of the southeast to that of countries further southeast, and the bulk of the Indian population to that of areas to India's west. Probably a large demographic expansion from India's northwest to the east and south took place during and at the end of the Harappan period (2,000 BC). It is logical to infer that the populations of the Mediterranean type were more concentrated in the northwest prior to that time; but it does not follow that they came from the outside. India's northwest simply happened to be the easternmost area of Caucasian habitation, just like India's northeast happens to be the frontier of the Mongoloid type's habitat.

For politically correct support in denying the racial divide between tribals and non-tribals, we may cite the Marxist scholar S. K. Chatterjee, who dismissed the notion of distinct races in India, be they Āryan, Dravidian, Mongoloid or Austro-Asiatic. He called the Indian people a "mixed people, in blood, in speech and in culture".[82]

Though the Christian missionaries have been the champions of tribal distinctness, Christian author P. A. Augustine writes about the Bhil tribals: "The Bhils have long

[79]B. Narasimhaiah: *Neolithic and Megalithic Cultures in Tamil Nadu*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi 1980, p. 195:

[80]Kailash C. Malhotra: "Biological Dimensions to Ethnicity and Caste in India", in K. S. Singh: *Ethnicity, Caste and People*, p. 63.

[81]*ibid.* p. 63

[82]S. K. Chatterjee: *Indianism and Indian Synthesis*, Calcutta 1962, p. 125.

ceased to be a homogeneous people. In the course of millennia, various elements have fused to shape the community. During their long and tortuous history, other aboriginal groups which came under their sway have probably merged with them, losing their identity. One can see a wide range of physical types and complexion. The variation in complexion is very striking indeed, ranging between fair to quite dark-skinned (...) There is no consensus among scholars on the exact ethnic character of the Bhils, They have been alternatively described as proto-Australoid, Dravidian or Veddoid."[83] The same racial "impurity" counts for most Indians, tribal as well as non-tribal. While not by itself disproving the Āryan invasion, it should prove even to invasionists that all Indians are descendents of both indigenous and so-called invader populations.

4.9.5 Language and genetics

While it is wrong to identify a speech community with a physical type, it is also wrong to discard physical anthropology completely as a source of information on human migrations in pre-literate times. Lately, findings have been published which suggest that, for all the racial mingling that has taken place, there is still a broad statistical correlation between certain physical characteristics and nations, even language groups.

Thus, the percentage of individuals with the Rhesus-negative factor is the highest (over 25%) among the Basques, a nation in the French-Spanish borderland which has preserved a pre-IE language. Other pockets of high incidence of Rh-negative (which is nearly non-existent among the Bantus, Australoids and Mongoloids) are in the same part of the world: western Morocco, Scotland and, strangely, the Baltic area, or apparently those backwater regions least affected by immigrations of the first Neolithic farmers (from the Balkans and Anatolia), the Indo-Europeans, and in Morocco also the Arabs.

Another European nation which stands out, at least to the discerning eye of the population geneticist, is the Sami (Lapp) population of northern Scandinavia: when contrasted genetically with the surrounding populations, the Sami genetic make-up "points to kinship with the peoples of North Siberia" even though they now resemble the Europeans more than the native Siberians.[84] This confirms the suspicion of an Asian origin for the Uralic-speaking peoples of which the Sami people is one.

Where a small group of people have spread out over a vast area and lived in isolation ever since, as has happened in large parts of America in the past 20,000 years, genetic differentiation and linguistic differentiation have gone hand in hand, and the borderline between genetic types usually coincides with a linguistic borderline: "Joseph Greenberg distinguishes three language families among the Native Americans: Amerind, Na-Dene and Eskimo-Aleut. (...) According to Christy Turner of Arizona University, Native American dental morphology indicates three groups, which coincide with Greenberg's. Luigi Cavalli-

[83] P. A. Augustine: *The Bhils of Rajasthan*, Indian Social Institute. Delhi 1986, p. 2-3.

[84] Hilde Van den Eynde: "Genetische kaart van Europa tekent oorlogen en volksverhuizingen", *De Standaard* (Brussels), 20-7-1993.

Sforza from Stanford investigated a variegated set of human genes. His results equally point in the direction of Greenberg's classification."[85]

Linguistic difference between populations may coincide with genetic differences; and likewise, linguistic mixing may coincide with genetic mixing. A perfect illustration is provided by Nelson Mandela, leader of the anti-Apartheid struggle and belonging to the Xhosa nation. His facial features are more *Khoi* (Hottentot) than Bantu, and his language, Xhosa, happens to be a Bantu language strongly influenced by the Khoi-San (Hottentot-Bushman) languages, most strikingly by adopting the click sounds. In this case, genetic mixing and linguistic mixing have gone hand in hand.

However, in and around the area of IE expansion, a notorious crossroads of migrating peoples, the remaining statistical correlation between genetic traits and language groups is less important than the evidence for the opposite phenomenon: languages spreading across genetic frontiers. In India, the only neat racial division which coincides with a linguistic borderline is between the mainland and the Andamans: though so-called Negrito features are dimly visible in the population of Orissa and surrounding areas, the pure Negrito type is confined to the Andamans, along with the Andamanese language group. For the rest, in India, like in Central Asia or Europe, i.e. in areas with lots of migration and interaction between diverse peoples, genetic and linguistic divisions only coincide by exception.

Thus, the Altaic languages are spoken by the Mongolians, eponymous members of the Mongoloid race, and by the Turks, who have mixed so thoroughly with their Persian, Armenian, Greek and Slavic neighbours that they now belong to the Caucasian race. The Hungarians are genetically closer to their Slavic and German neighbours than to their linguistic cousins in the Urals. India being the meeting-place (or rather, mixing-place) of Mongoloid, Caucasian and Austroloid racial strands, it is naturally impossible to identify the speakers of the different Indian language-groups with different races.

Asked whether there are "concordances between genetic data and languages", L. L. Cavalli-Sforza, the world's leading population geneticist, explains: "Yes, very much so. Our genealogical tree [of genetic traits] corresponds remarkably well with the table of linguistic families. There are a few exceptions e.g. the Lapps, genetically rather European, have preserved the language they spoke in their Siberian-Uralic homeland. The Hungarians, similarly, speak an Uralic language while being predominantly European. In the late 9th century AD, the Magyar invaders in Hungary, then called Pannonia, imposed their language on the natives. (...) What counts from a genetic viewpoint, is the number of invaders relative to the natives. As the Hungarians were not very numerous, they left only a feeble genetic imprint on the population."[86] So, the replacement of native languages by those of less civilized but stronger invaders is a real possibility (it is also what the Greeks did to the Old Europeans), though it becomes less probable in proportion to the size and the cultural

[85] Hilde Van den Eynde: "Biologen en archaeologen moeten Amerikaanse taalknoop doorhakken", *De Standard* (Brussels), 3-8-1990; see also Joseph H. Greenberg & Merritt Ruhlen: "Linguistic Origins of Native Americans". *Scientific American*, November 1992.

[86] Interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 23-1-1992.

superiority of the native population.

The reason why the replacement of native languages by the languages of genetically distinguishable invaders remains relatively exceptional, is this: "In a traditional culture, language is transmitted vertically from parents to children, just like the genes. But in some conquests or in civilizations with schools, there is also horizontal transmission and substitution of languages. The Romans organized schools in their part of Europe and thereby managed to replace the native languages by their own. But this type of phenomenon is relatively recent. In 90% of its history, mankind consisted of hunter-gatherers speaking tribal languages. That is why the genetic tree has preserved a strong concordance with the linguistic tree." [87]

A typical example are the Basques: "The Basque language is the direct descendent of a language which must have arrived along with modern mankind, say 30,000 years ago. It is [in Europe] the only pre-Indo-European language which has been preserved. Why? Probably because the Basque people had a very strong social cohesion. Genetically too, the Basques are different. They have mixed very little. All the other *Europeans have lost their original language and adopted an Indo-European language.*" [88]

So, the Basques are both biologically and linguistically the straight descendants of Old Europeans. Most other Europeans are biologically the progeny of the non-IE-speaking Old Europeans, with some admixture of the Asian tribes who originally brought the IE languages into Europe. These immigrants may have differed somewhat from the average European type, into which their smaller number got genetically drowned over the centuries. Linguistically, most non-Basque (and non-Uralic) Europeans are the progeny, through adoption, of the IE-speaking invaders.

4.9.6 The original "Āryan race"

Is there anything we can say about the ethnic identity of the nomads or migrants who spread the early IE languages, if only to help physical-anthropologists to recognize them when found at archaeological sites? Competent authorities have warned against the "semiconscious prejudices on original genetic characteristics of the Indo-Europeans: they are supposed to be blond and blue-eyed". [89] This prejudice has even been reinforced recently by the discovery of blond-haired mummies of presumably IE-speaking people in the Xinjiang province of China. [90]

The fact that the IE speech community includes people of diverse race, from the dark-skinned Sinhalese to the white-skinned Scandinavians, definitely implies that the spread of the language cannot be equated with the spread of a racial type. Languages can and

[87] *ibid.*

[88] *ibid.* Emphasis added

[89] T. V. Gamkrelidze and V. V. Ivanov, in *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1985/1-2, p. 182.

[90] See e.g. the fall/winter 1995 issue of *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, almost entirely devoted to the Xinjiang mummies.

do migrate across racial boundaries. That the IE languages crossed racial frontiers during their expansion accords well with established perspectives on the spread of IE, e.g. by I. M. Diakonov:

"These expanding tribes met local, poor and hungry sparser populations, often consisting of hunters and cattle-breeders. The migrants started to merge with the local population, giving them their language and cultural achievements. But in some cases, the local population may have been larger in numbers than the migrants. In some historical situations the language of the minority, if it was widely used and understandable on a vast territory, could be accepted as *lingua franca*, and later as the common language, particularly if it was a language of cattle-breeders (cf. the examples of the Semites and the Turks). The area of the newly created population became itself a centre of population spread, and so on. Bloody conquests could take place in some instances; in others it was not the case, but the important thing to realize is that what migrated were languages, not peoples, although there had to be at least a handful of users of the languages, though not necessarily native speakers." [91]

On the other hand, the fact that the PIE-speaking community must have been a fairly small ethnic group, living together and marrying mostly within the community, implies that they must have belonged collectively to a fairly precisely circumscribed physical type. Even if you throw together people from all races, after a few generations of interbreeding they will develop a common and distinctive physical type, with atavistic births of people resembling the pure type of one of the ancestral races becoming rarer and rarer. Therefore, in the days before intercontinental travel and migrations, a speech community was normally also a kinship group (or, in strict caste societies, a conglomerate of kinship groups) presenting a fairly homogeneous physical type.

During the heyday of the racial theories, a handful of words in Greek sources were taken to mean that the ancient Indo-Europeans were fair-haired and had a tall Nordic-looking build. In Homer's description, the Greek heroes besieging Troy were fair-haired. The Egyptians described the "Sea Peoples" from the Aegean region (and even their Libyan co-invaders, presumably Berber-speaking) as fair-haired. The Chinese described the Western (Tokharic) barbarians likewise.

However, the incidence of Nordic looks was not necessarily overwhelming. In classical Greek writings, the Thracians and Macedonians (most notably Alexander the Great), whose language belonged to an extinct Balkanic branch of the IE family, are mentioned as being fair-haired; apparently most Greeks were by then dark enough to notice this fair colour as a trait typical of their "barbaric" northern neighbours. The Armenians have a legend of their own king *Ara the Blond* and his eventful personal relationship with the Assyrian queen Sammuramat/Semiramis (about 810 BC), who is known to have fought Urartu (the pre-IE name of Armenia, preserved in the Biblical mountain name Ararat).

[91] I. M. Diakonov: "On the Original Home of ther Speakers of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-Europen Studies*, 1-2/1985, p. 92-174, specifically p. 152-153.

The use of "the blond" as a distinctive epithet confirms the existence of fair-haired people in Armenia, but also their conspicuousness and relative rarity.

All this testimony, along with the Xinjiang mummies and the presence of Nordic looks in the IE-speaking (Dardic/Kafiri) tribes in the Subcontinent's northwestern valleys, does suggest a long-standing association between some branches of the IE family and the genes which program their carriers to have fair hair and blue eyes. These traits give a comparative advantage for survival in cold latitudes: just as melanine protects against the excessive intake of ultraviolet rays in sunny latitudes, lack of melanine favours the intake of ultraviolet. This segment of the sunrays is needed in the production of vitamin D, which in turn is needed in shaping the bones; its deficiency causes rachitis and makes it difficult for women to birth - a decisive handicap in the struggle for life. The link between northern latitudes and the light colour of skin, hair and eyes in many IE-speaking communities only proves what we already knew: IE is spoken in fairly northern latitudes including Europe and Central Asia. Yet, none of this proves the fair-haired and blue-eyed point about the speakers of the original proto-language PIE.

Suppose, with the non-invasion theorists, that the original speakers of IE had been Indians with dark eyes and dark hair; then, according to I. M. Diakonov: "if this population had migrated together with the languages, blue-eyed Balts could not have originated from it. Blue eyes, as a recessive characteristic, are met everywhere from Europe to the Hindu Kush. But nobody can be blue-eyed if neither of his/her parents had blue-eyed ancestors, and a predominantly blue-eyed population cannot originate from ancestors with predominantly black eyes." [92]

This allows for two possible scenarios. Either the PIE speakers were indeed blue-eyed and fair-haired: that is the old explanation, preferred by the Nazis. [93] Or the blue-eyed people of Europe have not inherited their IE languages from their biological ancestors, but changed language at some point along the genealogical line, abandoning the pre-IE Old European language of their fair ancestors in favour of Proto-Germanic, Proto-Baltic, Proto-Slavic etc., based on the language of the invaders from Asia. The latter scenario would agree with I. M. Diakonov's observation: "The biological situation among the speakers of modern Indo-European languages can only be explained through a transfer of languages like a baton, as it were, in a relay race, but not by several thousand miles' migration of the tribes themselves." [94]

That this is far from impossible is demonstrated by the Turks who, after centuries of mixing with subdued natives of West Asia and the Balkans, have effectively crossed the racial borderline from yellow to white. But against using this Turkish scenario as a simile

[92] I. M. Diakonov: "On the Original Home of the Speakers of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-Europen Studies*, 1-2/1985, p. 153-154.

[93] Related with details and undisguised favour by Alain de Benoist: "Les Indo-Européens" (*Nouvelle Ecole* no. 49, Paris 1997), p. 47.

[94] I. M. Diakonov: "On the Original Home of the Speakers of Indo-European", *Journal of Indo-Europen Studies*, 1-2/1985, p. 153-154.

for the story of IE dispersal, one could point out that some eastern Turkic people, such as the Kirghiz and the Yakut, are still very much Mongoloids. However, far from forming a contrast with the IE state of affairs, this makes the simile more splendid: if IE spread from a non-white to a white population, it also remained the language of numerous non-whites (though technically "Caucasians"), viz. the Indians. On the Eurasian continent, South-Asians still constitute more than half of the wider IE speech community; the Indian Republic alone has more IE speakers than the whole of Europe.

It is perfectly possible that the PIE language and culture were developed after a non-white group of colonists from elsewhere settled among and got racially immersed in a larger whitish population. As we saw in our speculations about IE-Austronesian kinship and about *Purāṇ*ic history, it is at least conceivable that Āryan culture in India started after "Manu" and his dark-skinned cohorts fled the rising sea level by moving up the Gaṅgā and settling high and dry in the upper Gaṅgā basin, whence their progeny conquered areas to the northwest with ever whiter-skinned and lighter-haired populations: the Saraswatī basin, the upper Indus basin, the Oxus riverside, the peri-Caspian region. By the time these Indian colonists settled in eastern Europe with their Kurgans, their blackness had been washed off by generations of intermarriage with white people of the type attested by the Xinjiang mummies. (Likewise, their material culture had been thoroughly adapted to their new habitat, hence de-Indianized.)

So, it is perfectly possible that the Āryan heartland lay farther to the southeast, and that, like eastern Europe in the later 5$^{\text{th}}$ millennium BC, the Panjab area a few centuries earlier was already a first area of colonization, bringing people of a new and whiter physical type into the expanding Āryan speech community which was originally darker. While the Panjabi is physically very similar to the European, the Bihari, Oriya or Nepali is markedly less so, and yet it is possible that he represents more closely the ultimate Proto-Indo-European.

4.9.7 The race of the *Ved*ic Āryans

As for the *Veda*s, the only ones whom they describe as "golden-haired" are the resplendent lightning gods *Indra* and *Rudra* and the sun-god *Savitṛ*; not the Āryans or Brahmins. At the same time, several passages explicitly mention black hair when referring to Brahmins.[95] These texts are considerably earlier than the enigmatic passage in Patanjali describing Brahmins as golden- or tawny-haired (*piṅgala* and *kapiśa*).[96] Already one of Patanjali's early commentators dismissed this line as absurd. To the passage from the grammarian Pāṇini which describes Brahmins as "brown-haired", A. A. Macdonnell notes (apparently

[95] *Atharva-Veda* 6:137.2-3 is a charm, for making "strong black hairlocks" grow, apparently on the heads of bald or albino or greyed people. Paramesh Choudhury (*The Aryan Hoax*, p. 13) also mentions Baudhāyana's *Dharma-Sūtra* 1:2, "Let him kindle the sacrificial fire while his hair is still black", also cited in Śabara's Bhaṣya on Jaimini 1:33, as instances where Brahmins' hair is off-hand assumed to be black.

[96] Patanjali: *Mahābhāṣya* (comment on Pāṇini) 2:2:6.

against contemporary claims to the contrary): "All we can say is that the above-mentioned expressions do not give evidence of blonde characteristics of the ancient Brahmans." [97] Considering that Patanjali was elaborating upon the work of Pāṇini, could it have anything to do with Pāṇini's location in the far northwest, where lighter hair must have been fairly common?

On the other hand, demons or *Rākṣasa*s, so often equated with the "dark-skinned aboriginals", have on occasion been described as red- or tawny-haired (also *piṅgala* or *kapiśa*, the same as Patanjali's Brahmins). [98] Deviating from the usual Indian line that all these demon creatures are but supernatural entities, let us for once assume that they do represent hostile tribals racially distinct from the *Ved*ic Āryans. In that case, reference can only be to certain northwestern tribals, among whom fair and red hair are found till today, indicating that they at least partly descended from a fair-haired population. If the *Ved*ic Āryans were dark-haired and migrated from inside India to the northwest, these odd coloured hairs may have struck them as distinctive.

In modern Anglo-Hindu publications, such as the *Amar Chitra Katha* religious comics, *Rākṣasa*s are always depicted as dark-skinned, a faithful application of the AIT. Yet, there are instances in *Ved*ic literature where "blackness" is imputed to people whom we know to have had the same (if not a lighter) skin colour than the *Ved*ic Āryans: the *Dāsa*s and *Dasyu*s, as Asko Parpola has shown, were the Iranian cousins and neighbours of the *Ved* ic Āryans. Physical (as opposed to metaphorical) blackness or more generally skin colour was never a criterion by which the *Ved*ic Āryans classified their neighbours and enemies; that precisely is why we have no direct testimony on the *Ved*ic Āryans' own skin or hair colour except through a few ambiguous, indirect and passing references.

4.9.8 Evidence of immigration?

A very recent study, not on crude skull types but on the far more precise genetic traits, confirms the absence of an immigration from Central Asia in the second millennium BC. Brian E. Hemphill and Alexander F. Christensen report on their study of the migration of genetic traits (with reference to AIT advocate Asko Parpola): "Parpola's suggestion of movement of Proto-*Ṛg-Ved*ic Āryan speakers into the Indus Valley by 1800 BC is not supported by our data. Gene flow from Bactria occurs much later, and does not impact Indus Valley gene pools until the dawn of the Christian era." [99] The inflow which they do find, around the turn of the Christian era, is apparently that of the well-known Shaka and

[97] Quoted from his *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary* by Paramesh Choudhury: *The Aryan Hoax*, p. 13.

[98] E.g. *Mahābhārata: Ādiparva* 223, describes a *Rākṣasa* as red-haired, as pointed out by Paramesh Choudhury: *The Aryan Hoax*, p. 13. He also mentions that *Rāvaṇa*'s sister *Śūrpanakhā* is described by Vālmīki as having *piñgala* eyes, but remember that *Rāvaṇa*'s family is described as a Brahmin family immigrated in Lanka from northern India.

[99] Hemphill & Christensen: "The Oxus Civilization as a Link between East and West: A Non-Metric Analysis of Bronze Age Bactrian Biological Affinities", paper read at the South Asia Conference, 3-5 November 1994, Madison, Wisconsin; p. 13.

Kushana invasions.

Kenneth A. R. Kennedy reaches similar conclusions from his physical-anthropological data: "Evidence of demographic discontinuities is present in our study, but the first occurs between 6000 and 4500 BC (a separation of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic populations of Mehrgarh) and the second is after 800 BC, the discontinuity being between the peoples of Harappa, Chalcolithic Mehrgarh and post-Harappan Timargarha on the one hand and the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age inhabitants of Sarai Khola on the other. In short, there is no evidence of demographic disruptions in the northwestern sector of the subcontinent during and immediately after the decline of the Harappan culture. If *Ved*ic Āryans were a biological entity represented by the skeletons from Timargarha, then their biological features of cranial and dental anatomy were not distinct to a marked degree from what we encountered in the ancient Harappans." [100]

Kennedy also notes the anthropological continuity between the Harappan population and that of the contemporaneous Gandhara (eastern Afghanistan) [101] culture, which in an Āryan invasion scenario should be the Indo-Āryan settlement just prior to the Āryan invasion of India: "Our multivariate approach does not define the biological identity of an ancient Āryan population, but it does indicate that the Indus Valley and Gandhara peoples shared a number of craniometric, odontometric and discrete traits that point to a high degree of biological affinity." [102]

And so, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, one of the great pioneers of the AIT, may be right after all. Indeed, even he had remarked that "the anthropologists who have recently described the skeletons from Harappa remark that there, as at Lothal, the population would appear, on the available evidence, to have remained more or less stable to the present day." [103] If anything Āryan really invaded, it was at any rate not an Āryan race.

There are no indications that the racial composition and distribution of the Indian population has substantially changed since the start of the IE dispersal, which cannot rea-

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[100] K. A. R. Kennedy: "Have Aryans been identified in the prehistoric skeletal record from South Asia?", in George Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 49. On p. 42, Kennedy quotes the suggestion that "not only the end of the [Harappan] cities but even their initial impetus may have been due to Indo-European speaking peoples", by B. and F. R. Allchin: *The Birth of Indian Civilization*, Penguin 1968, p. 144.

[101] Note that many scholars assume an (albeit somewhat irregular) etymological kinship between *Gandhāra* and the Greek word *Kentauros*, meaning a horse-man. The rough terrain of Afghanistan was unfit for chariot-riding and required horseback-riding. To people from countries unfamiliar with horses (as India must have been in some pre-*Ved*ic age, and as Mesopotamia was until the 2nd millennium BC), horseborne men must have looked like strange creatures with a human head and torso and a equine body; indeed, that is what the Aztecs thought when they first saw Spanish cavalrists. Could the concept of a centaur date back to the early days of horse domestication when the first riders made such an impression on people from a region bordering on Afganistan and whence the Greeks originated?

[102] K. A. R. Kennedy: "Have Aryans been identified in the prehistoric skeletal record from South Asia?", in George Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 49.

[103] M. Wheeler: *The Indus Civilization*, Cambridge University Press 1968, p. 72, quoted in K. D. Sethna: *The Problem of Aryan Origins*, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi 1992 (1980), p. 20.

sonably be placed much earlier than 6,000 BC. This means that even if the IE language is imported, as claimed by the AIT, the IE-speaking people in India are nevertheless biologically native to India. Or in practice: the use of the terms "aboriginal" and "indigenous" (*ādivāsī*) as designating India's tribals, with the implication that the non-tribals are the non-indigenous progeny of invaders, has to be rejected and terminated, even if the Urheimat of the IE languages is found to lie outside India.

One of the ironies of Indian identity politics is that those most vocal in claiming an "aboriginal" identity may well be the only ones whose foreign origin has been securely established. The *Ādivāsī* movement is strongest in the areas where Christian missionaries were numerously present since the mid-19th century to nourish it, viz. in Chotanagpur and the North-East. Most tribals there speak languages belonging to the Austro-Asiatic and Sino-Tibetan families. Their geographical origin, unlike that of IE which is still being debated, is definitely outside India, viz. in Southeast Asia c.q. in northern China.

The Tibeto-Burmese tribals of Nagaland and other northeastern statelets are among India's most recent immigrants. Many of those tribes have entered during the last millennium, which is very late by Indian standards. As for the Munda tribes in Chotanagpur, it is not even certain that the ancestors of the present tribes are the authors of the attested Neolithic cultures in their present habitat. In H. D. Sankalia's words: "It is an *unanswered* but interesting question whether any of the Aboriginal tribes of these regions were the authors of the Neolithic culture." [104] Those who want to give the Austro-Asiatic peoples of India a proud heritage, will find more of it in China and Indochina than in India, e.g. in the Bronze age culture of 2300 BC in Thailand.

On the other hand, biologically the Indian Austro-Asiatics (unlike the Nagas) are much closer to the other Indians than to their linguistic cousins in the east. Exactly like the Indo-Āryans in the Āryan invasion hypothesis, they are predominantly Indian people speaking a foreign-originated language: "Whereas the now Dravidian-speaking tribals of Central and South India can be considered to be descendents of the original inhabitants of India, who gave up their original languages in favour of Dravidian, Tibeto-Chinese speaking tribals (Northeast India) and Austro-Asiatic speaking ones (East India) immigrated into India since ancient historical times. Most likely they came in several waves from Southern China (Tibeto-Chinese speakers) and from Southeast Asia (Austro-Asiatic speakers) respectively. Without doubt these immigrating groups met with ancient Indian populations, which were living already on their migration routes, and thus one cannot exclude some cultural and also genetic contacts between immigrants and original inhabitants of India, at least at some places." [105]

In the case of Indo-Āryan, by contrast, its speakers have obviously also mixed with other communities, but its foreign origin has not been firmly established.

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[104] H. D. Sankalia: *Indian Archaeology Today*, Delhi 1979, p. 22.

[105] H. Walter et al.: "Investigations on the variability of blood group polymorphisms among sixteen tribal populations from Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, India", in *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie*, Band 79 Heft 1 (1992).

4.9.9 Conclusion

We may conclude with a recent *status quaestionis* by archaeologist Jonathan Mark Kenoyer of Wisconsin University at Madison: "Although the overall socioeconomic organization changed, continuities in technology, subsistence practices, settlement organization, and some regional symbols show that the indigenous population was not displaced by invading hordes of Indo-Āryan speaking people. For many years, the 'invasions' or 'migrations' of these Indo-Āryan-speaking *Ved*ic/Āryan tribes explained the decline of the Indus civilization and the sudden rise of urbanization in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley. This was based on simplistic models of culture change and an uncritical reading of *Ved*ic texts. Current evidence does not support a pre- or proto-historic Indo-Āryan invasion of southern Asia. Instead, there was an overlap between Late Harappan and post-Harappan communities, with no biological evidence for major new populations." [106]

We repeat that physical anthropology is going through rapid developments due to the availability of new techniques, and we don't want to jump to conclusions in this moving field. But we notice that whatever new technique is applied and from whichever new angle the question is approached, it has so far consistently failed to yield evidence of the fabled Āryan Invasion.

[106] J. M. Kenoyer: "The Indus Valley Tradition of Pakistan and Western India", *Journal of World Prehistory*, 1991/4. Interestingly and fortunately, Kenoyer was until recently misinformed about the political connotations of the Āryan question, as I noticed during a conversation with him on 20 October 1995 in Madison, Wisconsin. Labouring under the assumption that the Bharatiya Janata Party is a "fascist" party, proud of Nordic Āryan origins and disdaining the dark-skinned Indian natives, he thought he was taking a bold stand against the BJP by refuting the AIT. If he had known that the BJP shares the dislike of most Indian patriots for the AIT, he might have been more subdued in his advocacy of a non-AIT scenario, especially considering the extreme politicization (in an anti-BJP sense) of Indology in the USA.

Chapter 5

Some New Arguments

5.1 A REMARKABLE BOOK

In spite of the mutual deafness of the pro- and anti-invasionist schools, the increasing awareness of a challenge has led prominent scholars groomed in the invasionist view to collect, for the first time in their careers, actual arguments in favour of the Āryan Invasion Theory. As yet this is never in the form of a pointwise rebuttal of an existing anti-invasionist argumentation, a head-on approach so far exclusively adopted by one or two non-invasionists.[1] Nonetheless, some recent contributions to the archaeological and physical-anthropological aspects of the controversy pose a fresh challenge to the (by now often over-confident) anti-invasionist school.

An extremely important new synthesis of various types of data is provided by Dr. Bernard Sergent in his book Genesis of India, as yet only available in French.[2] The book comes as a sequel to his equally important book, *Les Indo-Européens* (1995). Sergent is a Ph.D. in Archaeology with additional degrees in Physical Anthropology and in History, a researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, and chairman of the French Society for Mythology.

One of Sergent's objectives is to counter the rising tide of skepticism against the AIT with archaeological and other proofs. In particular, he proposes a precise identification of a particular Harappan-age but non-Harappan culture with the Indo-Āryans poised to invade India: the Bactrian Bronze Age culture of ca. 2000 BC. At the same time, he is quite scornful of AIT critics and neglects to take their arguments apart, which means that he effectively leaves them standing.

Sergent is very skeptical of the Āryan non-invasion theory, and dismisses it in one sentence plus footnote as simply unbelievable and as the effect of nationalistic blindness

[1] S. Talageri: *Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, passim; and K. D. Sethna: *The Problem of Aryan Origins*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi 1992 (1980), which includes a lengthy appendix dissecting Asko Parpola's archaeological evidence.

[2] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, Payot, Paris 1997.

for the shattering evidence provided by linguistics.[3] Nonetheless, it is important to note that, unlike Indian Marxists, he does not show any contempt for Hinduism or for the idea of India. Most people who analyze Indian culture into different contributions by peoples with divergent origins do so with the implicit or explicit message that "there is no such thing as Indian or Hindu culture, there is only a composite of divergent cultures, each of which should break free and destroy the dominant Brahminical system which propagates the false notion of a single all-Indian culture". Sergent, by contrast, admits that the ethnically different contributions have merged into an admirable synthesis, e.g.: "One of the paradoxes of India is its astonishing linguistic diversity (they speak about five hundred languages there) compared with its cultural unity."[4] Rather than denying the idea of India, he strongly sympathizes with it: though a construct of history, India is a cultural reality. This French invasionist is more an Indian patriot than most Indian invasionists.

To do full justice to Sergent's work, I must refer to the original, and I hope it will soon be translated in English or Hindi. Here, we will only discuss some of the most original or controversial points.

5.2 EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

5.2.1 A touchy subject

Bernard Sergent treads sensitive ground in discussing the evidence furnished by physical anthropology. Though not identifying language with race (as some 19th-century scholars did), he maintains that in many cases, a certain correlation between language and genes may nonetheless be discernible. As we have seen, this thesis has been put forward by Luigi Cavalli-Sforza and other leading population geneticists. The underlying logic is simple: people who speak a common language do so by living together as a community, and as such, they will also intermarry and pass on their genes along with their language and culture to their children. To say that there was an original IE community whose language got diversified into the existing IE languages, and whose "heirs" we IE-speakers are, is already enough to attract suspicions of Nazi fantasies, even in the case of so authoritative and objective a scholar as Bernard Sergent.

Indeed, oblique aspersions are cast on Sergent by Jean-Paul Demoule, who uses the familiar and simple technique of juxtaposition, i.c. with the term "mother race", used off-hand by Emmanuel Leroy-Ladurie in a review of Sergent's book *Les Indo-Européens.*[5] Demoule's explicit thesis is that "not one scientific fact allows support for the hypothesis of an original [PIE-speaking] people". In fact, there are no known languages which are not

[3] *ibid.* p. 370, 477 n-485.
[4] *ibid.* p. 9
[5] Jean-Paul Demoule: "Les Indo-Européens, un mythe sur mesure", *La Recherche*, April 1998, p. 41.

spoken by a living community or a "people", either in the past (e.g. Latin) or in the present. The only exception would be Esperanto, an artificial language; but would Prof. Demoule maintain that IE came about as a constructed (*"sanskṛta"*) language, propagated by word of mouth from the Bay of Bengal to the Atlantic coast? Plain common sense requires that the PIE dialects were also spoken by some such "people". If postmodernists like Demoule want to deny to the hypothetical PIE language the *necessary* hypothesis that it was used by a community of speakers, it is up to them to provide an alternative hypothesis plus the "scientific facts" supporting it.

A related political inhibition obstructing the progress of research in IE studies is the post-1945 mistrust of migratory models as explanations of the spread of technologies, cultures or indeed languages. Sergent goes against the dominant tendency by insisting that the IE language family has spread by means of migrations.[6] Prior to the telegraph and the modern electronic media, a language could indeed only be spread by being physically taken from one place to the next. In the case of India, while we need not concede Sergent's specific assumption of an Āryan immigration, it is obvious that migrations have been a key factor in the present distribution of languages.[7]

As he points out, the historical period in India has witnessed well-recorded invasions by the Greeks, Huns, Scythians, Kushanas, Arabs, Turks, Afghans and Europeans, producing such linguistic phenomena as Greek loans in Sanskrit, the Persian-Hindi hybrid language Urdu, the Portuguese family names of many Indian Christians, the de facto status of English as India's link language, and numerous English loans in Tamil and other modern Indian languages, plus a handful of Indian loans in European languages generally (*ginger*, *rice*) and a whole lot in English specifically (*thug*, *goonda*, *bungalow*, *jungle* etc.). And that is mild stuff compared with the Americas, where European immigration has marginalized or extinguished numerous native languages and replaced them wholesale with a few European ones. So, there is no need to be shy about surmising the existence and the linguistic impact of migrations, including violent ones, in the proto-historical period. It so happens that migrations may leave traces in the physical-anthropological "record" of a population, thus adding modern genetics to the sciences which can be employed in reconstructing ancient history.

5.2.2 A challenge to monogenism?

The presence of human and para-human races in India is extremely ancient, including attested traces of archanthropian specimina of Homo Erectus. Among the extraordinary findings, surprisingly late traces of pre-human hominids have been found in the Narmada

[6]Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*,153-156, criticizing non-migrationist theses by Jean-François Jarrige and Jim Shaffer.

[7]One scholar who still agrees with Dr. Sergent's common-sense position is Dr. Robert Zydenbos ("An obscurantist argument", *Indian Express*, 12-12-1993): "And it should be clear that languages do not migrate by themselves: people migrate, and bring languages with them."

Valley, dated to ca. 23,000 BC. This, to Sergent, confirms the hypothesis that Homo Sapiens Sapiens has mixed with Homo Erectus in Asia, just as modern man has mixed to an extent with Homo Sapiens Neanderthalensis in Europe.[8] Sergent reminds us that the dental characteristics of the xanthodermic (yellow-skinned) race are those of Homo Erectus rather than of Homo Sapiens.

This could be read as an implicit questioning of the monogenist thesis, i.e. the assumption that the human species has crossed the threshold from animal to human as a single collectivity. After 1945, this assumption has been insisted upon as if it were a religious dogma, because it was feared that polygenism would undermine the unity of the human species.[9] This fear seems unfounded: the simple fact that the different human races can interbreed and have *fertile* offspring (unlike horse and donkey, or lion and tiger) firmly establishes the unity of the human species.[10] The relative unimportance of mono- or polygenism is shown by the Biblical example of the extremely unequal valuation and treatment of the "Hamitic" race (interpreted as either the natives of Canaan, crushed by the Israelites under Joshua, or as the Black Africans, reduced to slavery by Christian Europeans) for the sin of their ancestor Ham, even though the latter had a common origin with his brothers Sem, deemed ancestor of the Israelites, and Japhet, deemed ancestor of the Europeans. The monogenist belief that Noah was the common ancestor of the Hamite, Semite and Japhetite "races" could not prevent the extreme inequality between them.

By contrast, the polygenist discovery of a dental trait of the "infra-human" Homo Erectus in the yellow race has not led to a classification of the yellow race as subhuman or otherwise inferior. On the contrary, even white believers in racial inequality (like Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray in their controversial book *The Bell Curve*, 1994) have affirmed the *superior intelligence*, on average, of yellow as compared with white and black people. Being a partial descendant of the Neanderthal troglodytes myself, I propose we celebrate the fusion of different strands of *homines* in our own genes. Indeed, what the mixing of Sapiens Sapiens with Neanderthalensis and Erectus proves, is that they were not really different species, but merely different races within the developing human species; and this restores monogenism.

[8] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 35-37. Fresh confirmation of the Sapiens-Neanderthal mixing was unearthed in Lapedo Valley near Leiria, Portugal, in December 1998: a 4-year-old boy who lived 24,500 years ago and whose skeleton shows mixed charcateristics of both Homo types, according to palaeo-anthropologist Dr. Erik Trinkaus (*De Standaard*, 26-4-1999).

[9] About the ideological extrapolations from polygenist and monogenist anthropologies, see Léon Poliakov: *Le Mythe Aryen* (Paris 1971), ch. 2.2.

[10] It is a different matter that some polygenists did indeed hold crudely racist views, e.g. the proto-Nazi Ariosophists, led by Guido von List (1848-1919) and Joerg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874-1954) ascribed divergent origins to the different non-white and Jewish "races", with the Black Africans being a hybrid progeny fathered by white Āryans upon apes, cfr. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke: *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, Tauris, London 1992 (1985).

5.2.3 The Veddoid aboriginals

Sergent claims that the oldest Homo Sapiens Sapiens racial type of India, now largely submerged by interbreeding with immigrant Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and IE populations, is the one preserved in the Vedda and Rodiya tribes of Sri Lanka. Earlier physical-anthropologists had isolated them as "primitive", by which they meant un-European: little facial and body hair, broad nose, receding forehead, heavy eyebrows. They also recognized them as very similar to the Australian aboriginals, though the latter are in fact less dissimilar from the European type, e.g. being just as hairy and often having light-brown or blond hair. Though living in the southernmost, near-equatorial part of the subcontinent, the Veddas are not black but brown.

While the purely black skin is associated (by Sergent) with the population which "brought" the Dravidian languages, the Veddoid traits are found to an extent among tribal populations in south India and as far north as the Bhils and the Gonds. Perhaps Nahali is the last remnant of the lost language of this ancient layer of the Indian population, for all the said tribes including the Veddas now speak the languages of their non-tribal neighbours.[11]

The Veddoid type has also been found in the Harappan area, in the chronologically post-Harappan and culturally non-Harappan site known as Cemetery H. It has even been found in Iran and Mesopotamia. In Sergent's view, this indicates the trail of the Veddoid-Australoid vanguard of Homo Sapiens Sapiens on its way from Africa to East Asia, Indonesia and Australia, very roughly in 40,000 BC. In countries along the way, this type may have coexisted with Homo Erectus for thousands of years before assimilating or displacing the latter, and before being assimilated or displaced by other, more European-like racial types.

5.2.4 Waves of immigrants

Bernard Sergent questions the neat division of the South-Asian population into "Mediterranean", "Melano-Indian" (, associated with the Dravidian languages) and "Veddoid" or "Australoid", introduced by British colonial anthropologists: "the Vedda, the Melano-Indians and the Indus people and the actual inhabitants of the northern half of India, which classical anthropology used to class as Mediterraneans, all belong to one same human 'current' of which they manifest the successive 'waves'. Everything indicates, physical traits as well as geographical distribution, that the Vedda have arrived first, followed by the Melano-Indians, and then the Indus people."[12] Note that he does not mention "Āryans" as a distinct type separate from and arriving after the "Indus people".

Sergent rejects the classical view that populations having traits halfway between the typical Veddoid and Mediterranean traits must be considered "mixed". Instead, rather

[11] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 38.

[12] *ibid.* p. 43.

than assuming discrete racial types subsequently subject to miscegenation, he posits a racial continuum, corresponding with the continuum of migrations from northeastern Africa via West Asia to South Asia. Indeed, he takes a few Veddoid-looking skeletons found in Mesopotamia as proof that the Veddas too were immigrants into India, "far from representing emigrations from India (how and when could these have come about, all movements going in the opposite sense, as we shall see?)".[13]

The circular argument that the distribution of Veddoid skulls over South- as well as West Asia must be due to a southeastward migration as all migrations in this region have been southeastward, loses much of its force when we consider that in the historical period, northwestward migrations are equally attested, esp. that of the Gypsies hardly a thousand years ago. Nonetheless, with the present state of knowledge suggesting an African origin for modern humanity, it is of course plausible that India's first human inhabitants were immigrants from West Asia and ultimately from Africa.

The Dravidian-speakers largely coincide with a racial type called "Melano-Indian", which is very dark-skinned (darker than the Veddas), but in all other respects similar not to the Melano-Africans but to the Mediterranean variety of the white race, e.g. wavy hair, a near-vertical forehead, thinner nose. Sergent thinks they arrived in Mehrgarh well before the beginning of the Neolithic, in ca. 8,000 BC, and that they were subsequently replaced or absorbed by the real Harappans, who belonged to the "Indo-Afghan" type.[14]

At this point, it is customary to point to the Dravidian Brahui speakers of Baluchistan (living in the vicinity of Mehrgarh) as a remnant of the Dravidian Harappans. However, they are physically indistinguishable from the Iranian Baluchis, and Sergent proposes that the Brahui speakers, far from being a native remnant of a pre-Harappan population of Baluchistan, only immigrated into Baluchistan from inner India in the early Muslim period. Given that Baluchi, a West-Iranian language, only established itself in Baluchistan in the 13th century ("for 2000 years, India has been retreating before Iran")[15], and that the only Indo-Iranian loans in Brahui are from Baluchi and not from Indo-Āryan, Sergent deduces that Brahui was imported in its present habitat only that late.[16] We'll have to leave that as just a proposal for now: it is hard to understand how a Central-Indian population could migrate there, dissolve itself physically into the Baluchi population yet remain linguistically distinct.

The Harappan civilization "prolongs the ancient Neolithic of Baluchistan [viz. Mehrgarh], whose physical type is West-Asian, notably the type called (because of its contemporary location) Indo-Afghan".[17] This suggests that the "Indo-Afghan" type was located elsewhere

[13] *ibid.* p. 44.

[14] *ibid.* p. 50.

[15] *ibid.* p. 29. Indeed, both Baluchistan (including the Brahminical place of pilgrimage Hinglaj) and the Northwest Frontier Province (homeland of Pāṇini) were partly Indo-Āryan-speaking before Baluchi and Pashtu moved in.

[16] *ibid.* p. 130.

[17] *ibid.* p. 50.

before the beginning of the Neolithic in Mehrgarh, viz. in West Asia. If so, this means that the last great wave of immigrants (as opposed to smaller waves like the Scythian or the Turco-Afghan or the English which did not deeply alter the average genetic type of the Indian population) took place thousands of years before the supposed Āryan invasion. And the latter, bringing Āryans of the Indo-Afghan type into an India already populated with Harappans of the Indo-Afghan type, happens to be untraceable in the physical-anthropological data.

No new blood type or skull type or skin colour marks the period when the Āryans are supposed to have invaded India. So, one potentially decisive proof of the Āryan invasion is conspicuously missing. Indeed, the physical-anthropological record is now confidently used by opponents of the AIT as proof of the continuity between the Harappan and the post-Harappan societies in northwestern India.

5.3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

5.3.1 Tracing the Āryan migrants

Though die question of Āryan origins was much disputed m the 19th century, the Āryan invasion theory has been so solidly dominant in the past century that attempts to prove it have been extremely rare in recent decades (why prove the obvious?), until the debate flared up again in India after 1990. In his attempt to prove the Āryan invasion, Bernard Sergent uses the archaeological record, which, paradoxically, is invoked with equal confidence by the non-invasionist school.[18]

The crux of the matter is: can archaeologists trace a population migrating through Central Asia and settling down in India? There seems to be new hope to pin down this elusive band of migrants: "Today, thanks to the extremely rich findings in Central Asia in the past twenty years, the discovery of the 'pre-Indian Indians' has become possible."[19]

Before discussing his evidence, let us consider the apparent lack of evidence for the opposite itinerary: India to Central Asia. So far, Indian scholars have been on the defensive, busy refuting the AIT but not elaborating an India-centred alternative scenario of IE expansion. Indeed, some of them just deny the existence of an IE language family, so that no expansion needs to be reconstructed. In the absence of an archaeological Saraswatī-to-Volga trail, I suppose that established archaeologists would readily point to important differences between pre-Harappan culture of ca. 5,000 BC and the contemporaneous Central-Asian cultures, e.g. the higher degree of sophistication and incipient urbanization in northwestern India, or the much more intense use which was made of the horse in Central Asia and in the Pontic region by 4,000 BC.

My layman's reply would be as follows. The fact that there are differences between Central-Asian cultures and (pre-)Harappan culture hardly disproves the possibility of mi-

[18] E.g. B. B. Lal: *New Light on the Indus Civilization*, Aryan Books, Delhi 1997.

[19] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p-33.

grations from India to Central Asia. To an extent, it is perfectly normal that the itinerary cannot be traced by archaeology alone: when people move from an urban environment in a hot climate to a steppe region with bitterly cold winters, their material culture changes. Iranian having developed into a distinct branch of Indo-Iranian by Zarathushtra's time, we may surmise that Iranian emigrants from India must have been settled in Bactria for quite some time by the end of the Harappan city culture, long enough to have differentiated a lot from their pre-Harappan Indian mother culture.

For the sake of comparison, the Dutch Afrikaners in Transvaal gradually lost touch with the European world and its technological progress; for their metalwork, a routine affair in Holland, they had to go to Zulu blacksmiths, having lost the skill themselves. The European trappers in North America returned to an almost prehistorical lifestyle during their stays in the forests. In antiquity, with communications being so much more limited, this effect must have been much stronger: Harappan immigrants in Central Asia soon adopted the material culture of their new environment, forgetting the most advanced and complex elements of Indian culture.

Nonetheless, it remains possible for archaeologists to ascertain the Dutch presence in 19th-century Transvaal or that of French fur-hunters in 18th-century Canada, e.g. by discovering remains of non-indigenous rifles. So, Indian archaeologists should come out of their defensive position and see for themselves what evidence there may be for the presence of Indian colonists in Central Asia and for an India-to-Europe migration. It is quite possible that such evidence is already on the table but that no one has interpreted it correctly due to the widespread AIT bias.

5.3.2 The Bactrian culture

Bactria, the basin of the Amu Darya or Oxus river, now northern Afghanistan plus south-eastern Uzbekistan, is historically the cradle of Iranian culture. In an Indian Urheimat scenario, the Iranians left India either after or, apparently more in line with scriptural evidence, before the heyday of the Harappan cities. The next waystation, where they developed their own distinct culture, was Bactria. In that framework, it is entirely logical that a separate though Harappa-related culture has been discovered in Bactria and dated to the late 3rd millennium BC. However, Bernard Sergent identifies this Bronze Age culture of Bactria, "one of the most briliant civilizations of Asia" [20], as that of the Indo-Āryans poised to invade India.

Though not figuring much in the development of his own theory, evidence for similarities in material culture between Harappa and Bactria is acknowledged by Bernard Sergent, e.g. ceramics resembling those found in Chanhu-Daro. This Harappan influence oh the Bactrian culture proper is distinct from the existence of six fully Harappan colonies in Afghanistan, most importantly Shortugai in Bactria, "a settlement completely Harappan in character on a tributary of the Amu Darya (...) on the foot of the ore-rich Badakshan

[20] *ibid.* p. 157.

range (...) with lapis lazuli, gold, silver, copper and lead ores. Not one of the standard characteristics of the Harappan cultural complex is missing from it." [21] Logically, the close coexistence of Harappan colonies and Bactrian settlements was a conduit for mutual influence but also a source of friction and conflict. Indian-Iranian conflict has been a constant from the Bronze Age (with the replacement of Harappan with Bactrian culture in Shortugai ca. 1800 BC) [22] through Pehlevi, Shaka and Afghan invasions until Nadir Shah's sack of Delhi in the 18th century.

Sergent notes a peculiarity of the Bronze Age Bactrian culture: "in contrast with all the neighbouring cultures, the settlements of this culture are characterized by a very feeble accumulation: they were constructed in haste, apparently on the basis of a pre-established plan, and have not been occupied for very long". [23] That such makeshift settlements have produced such "brilliant" culture, indicates to me that they already had a brilliant cultural heritage to start with. And isn't precisely the Harappan culture known for its proficiency in urban planning?

Sergent cites Akhmadali A. Askarov's conclusion that the Harappan-Bactrian similarities are due to "influence of northwestern India on Bactria by means of a migration of Indus people to Central Asia after the end of their civilization". [24] The acknowledgment of a Harappa-to-Bactria movement is well taken, but this poses a chronological problem (unless we assume that the Iranians themselves were Harappans, refugees from the debris of a crumbling civilization). Sergent himself solves the chronological problem by pointing out that Askarov and other Soviet scholars who first dug up the sites in Margiana (eastern Turkmenistan) and Bactria, used an obsolete form of C-14 Carbon dating, and that newer methods have pushed the chronology of these sites back by centuries. [25] For Sergent, this chronological correction is essential: if the Bactrian culture was that of the Indo-Āryans who brought down the Indus civilization, it is necessary that they lived there before the end of the latter.

Sergent then mentions a number of similarities in material culture between the Bactrian culture and some cultures in Central Asia and in Iran proper, e.g. ceramics like those of Namazga-V (southern Turkmenistan). Some of these were loans from Elam which were being transmitted from one Iranian (in his reconstruction, Indo-Iranian) settlement to the next, e.g. the so-called "Luristan bronzes", Luristan being a Southwest-Iranian region where Elamite culture was located. Some were loans from the "neighbouring and older" [26] culture of Margiana: does this not indicate an east-to-west gradient for the Indo-Iranians?

[21] Maurizio Tosi: "De indusbeschaving voorbij de grenzen van het Indisch subcontinent", in UNESCO exhibition book *Oude Culturen in Pakistan*, Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis, Brussels 1989, p. 133.

[22] *ibid.* p. 180.

[23] *ibid.* p. 160.

[24] *ibid.* p. 224, with reference to A. A. Askarov's: "Traditions et innovations dans la culture du nord de la Bactriane à l'age du bronze", *Colloque Archèologie*, CNRS, Paris 1985, p. 119-124.

[25] *ibid.* p. 160.

[26] *ibid.* p. 158.

Well, one effect of Sergent's chronological correction is that what seem to be influences from elsewhere on Bactrian culture, may have to be reversed: "From that point onwards, the direction of exchanges and influences gets partly reversed: a number of similarities can just as well be explained by an influence of Bactria on another region as one of another on Bactria." [27] So, even for the relation between the Bactrian culture and its neighbours, the proper direction required by the AIT has not been demonstrated, let alone a movement all the way from the northern Caspian region to India. And if there was transmission from other cultures to Bactria (as of course there was), this does not prove that the Bactrians were colonists originating in these other cultures; they may simply have practised commerce.

At any rate, all the sites related in material culture to the Dashli settlement (except for the Harappan sites) are in present-day Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan or Iran proper, and are without exception places which were Iranian at the time they made their appearance in written history in the last millennium BC (or earlier if that source was the *Avesta*). While migrations are obviously possible, it seems to me that this says something about the burden of proof. It is entirely reasonable to accept as a starting hypothesis that the Dashli settlement, like its sister settlements, was n. Those who insist it was something else, should accept the burden of proving that Dashli was different, that migrations took place in which the Indo-Āryans there made way for Iranians whose presence there was certified a few centuries later, and if possible also to explain why those things happened.

5.3.3 Bactria vs. Harappa

A new insight based on archaeology and detrimental to the stereotypical Harappan/Āryan opposition, is that the Harappans were not matriarchal pacifists after all, that they did have weapons and fortifications, "just like" the Āryans. [28] This has even been argued by Prof. Shereen Ratnagar, a virulent critic of all Indocentric revisions of the Āryan question. [29] Incidentally, the Dravidians, often identified with the Harappans, were not all that peace-loving either: in the context of research into the identity of the megalith-builders in South India in the 2nd millennium BC. Asko Parpola sees a connection between the glorification of war in Old Tamil poetry and the findings of weaponry in Megalithic graves. [30] in the jungle of the human world, purely pacifistic civilizations would not be viable except as a pipe-dream.

Yet, at this point, Sergent insists on the old picture: relatively unarmed mercantile Harappans versus heavily armed Āryans preparing their invasion in Bactria. It is not a

[27] *ibid.* p. 160

[28] This is one of the points elaborated by Shereen Ratnagar: *Enquiries into the Political Organization of Harappan Society*, Ravish Publ., Pune 1991.

[29] Vide Shereen Ratnagar: "Revisionist at work: a chauvinistic inversion of the Aryan invasion theory", *Frontline*, 9-2-1996, an attack on Prof. N. S. Rajaram.

[30] Asko Parpola: *Deciphering the Indus Script*, Cambridge University Press 1994, p. 171.

contrast between martial and pacifist, but at least one between more martial and less martial. The Bactrian settlements abound in metal weaponry, and this does present a contrast with the relative paucity of weapons in Harappa. The latter was a well-ordered mercantile society, while Bactria seems to have been a frontier society.

However, this need not indicate an ethnic or linguistic difference: at the time of writing, English law prohibits nearly every form of private possession of firearms, while American law allows every citizen to carry firearms and most American families do indeed possess some. A different situation and history can account for a different attitude to weaponry, even within the same speech community. On the other hand, to pursue the comparison, British and American English have grown somewhat apart; in the absence of modern communication, they might have been close to differentiating as much from each other as Iranian did from Indo-Āryan. Would the latter difference not neatly fit the relation between Harappan and Bactrian societies: related but sufficiently distinct?

The emphatically martial culture of Bactria as compared with the relatively peaceful culture of the Indus-Saraswatī civilization reminds us of a contrast between Iranian and Indian in the historical period. In pre-Alexandrine Iranian royal inscriptions, we come across truly shameless expressions of pride in bloody victories, even defiantly detailing the cruel treatment meted out to the defeated kings. By contrast, in Aśoka's inscriptions, we find apologies for the bloody Kalinga war and a call for establishing peace and order. Far from being a purely Buddhist reaction against prevalent Hindu martial customs, Aśoka's relative pacifism presents a personal variation within a broader and more ancient tradition of *Ahiṃsā*, non-violence, best expressed in some sections of the *Mahābhārata*. Though this epic (and most explicitly its section known as the *Bhagavad Gīta*) rejects the extremist non-violence propagated by Mahatma Gandhi and also by the wavering *Arjuna* before the decisive battle, *Kṛṣṇa*'s exhortation to fight comes only after every peaceful means of appeasing or reconciling the enemy has been tried.

True, the *Veda*s seem to be inspired by the same martial spirit of the Iranian inscriptions, but in the Indocentric chronology, they predate the high tide of Harappan civilization, belonging to a pre-Harappan period of conquest, viz. the conquest of the northwest by the Yamunā/Saraswatī-based Puru tribe. Their westward conquest was part of a larger westward movement including the Iranian conquest of Central Asia. By way of hypothesis, I propose that *Ahiṃsā* was a largely post-*Ved*ic development (though it has been argued that *Ved*ic ritual rules to minimize the suffering of the sacrificed animals already prove the existence of the *Ahiṃsā* spirit, a concern equally present in Zarathushtra's hymns) [31], and that the Iranians missed its more radical phase, sticking instead to the more uncivilized glorification of victory by means of force. This would concur with the finding of a more military orientation of Bactrian culture as compared with the post-*Ved*ic Harappan culture.

[31] Discussed in Hans-Peter Schmidt: "The origin of Ahimsa", *Mèlanges d'Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louis Renou*, Paris 1968, and Herman W. Tull: "The killing that is not killing: men, cattle and the origins of non-violence (ahimsa) in the *Ved*ic sacrifice", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 1996, p. 223-244.

5.3.4 The Bactrian *Tripura*

In the principal Bactrian site of Dashli, a circular building with three concentric walls has been found. The building was divided into a number of rooms and inside, three fireplaces on platforms were discovered along with the charred remains of sacrificed animals. In this building, its Soviet excavator Viktor Sarianidi recognized an Iranian temple, but Sergent explains why he disagrees with him.[32] He argues that the *Ved*ic Āryans were as much fire-worshippers as the Iranians, and like the early Iranians (prior to the establishment of Zarathushtra's reforms), they sacrificed animals, so that the excavated fire altars could be either Indo-Āryan or Iranian.

Of course, India and Iran have a large common heritage, and many religious practices, mythical motifs and other cultural items were the same or closely similar in both. But that truism will not do to satisfy Sergent's purpose, which is to show that the Bactrian culture was not generally Indo-Iranian, and definitely not Iranian, but specifically Indo-Āryan. There is nothing decisively un-Iranian about the Dashli fire altars.

On the contrary, there may well be something un-Indic and specifically Iranian about it. First of all, roundness in buildings is highly unusual in Hindu culture, which has a strong preference for square plans (even vertically, as in windows, where rectangular shapes are preferred over arches), in evidence already in the Harappan cities. Moreover, Sergent notes the similarity with a fire temple found in Togolok, Margiana. The Togolok fire altar has gained fame by yielding traces of a plant used in the *Soma* (Iranian: *Haoma*) sacrifice: laboratory analysis in Moscow showed this to be *Ephedra*, a stimulant still used in ephedrine and derivative products.[33] Asko Parpola tries to turn the Togolok temple into an Indo-Iranian and possibly proto-*Ved*ic one citing the *Soma* sacrifice there as evidence: the *Ṛg-Ved*ic people reproached their *Dāsa* (Iranian) enemies for not performing rituals including the *Soma* ritual, so Parpola identifies the former with the *"Haumavarga Shakas"* or *Soma*-using Scythians mentioned in Zoroastrian texts.[34] However, every testimony we have of the Scythians, including the *Haumavarga* ones in whose sites traces of the

[32]Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 161.

[33]The name *Soma/Haoma* does not etymologically refer to a specific plant, but to the process of pressing it to obtain its juices: *sav/hav*, "to press/crush". Gernot Windfuhr: "*Haoma/Soma*: the Plant", *Acta Iranica* 25, 2nd series, vol.XI (Brill, Leiden 1985), p. 699-726, proposes that the original *Soma* plant was a man-shaped root, like the European *mandrake*, probably the *ginseng* root. Windfuhr shows that its symbolic connection with the celestial man (the constellation Orion) has an exact parallel in the Chinese lore about this strongly medicinal plant. on the other hand, ginseng is at best very rare in the foothills of the Himālayas, while ephedra is quite common there and in the Afghan and Iranian highlands, and it also has mild mind-altering properties. So, the discovery of ephedra in Togolok seems to be a decisive breakthrough to near-certainty about the identity of *Soma*. Further arguments for the ephedra hypothesis are given by Harri Nyberg: "The problem of the Aryans and the Soma: the botanical evidence", in G. Erdosy: *The Indo-Āryans in Ancient South Asia*, p. 382-406.

[34]K. D. Sethna: *The Problem of Aryan Origins*, supplement 5, with reference to (and extensive quotation from) Asko Parpola: "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dasas", in *Studia Orientalia*, vol.64 (Helsinki 1988), p. 195-265; see also the review of Parpola's essay by Harry Falk, in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 34, 1991, p. 57-60.

Soma ceremony have been found, is as an Iranian-speaking people. It is possible that the sedentary Iranians included all nomads in their term *Shaka*, even the hypothetical *Ved* ic-Āryan nomads on their way to India, but it is not more than just possible. The use of *Soma* was a bone of contention *within Mazdeism*, with Zarathushtra apparently opposing it against its adepts who were equally Iranian.[35]

And even if Thomas Burrow were right with his thesis that the Mazdean religion originated in a sustained reaction against the Indo-Āryans present in Bactria and throughout the Iranian speech area (making the non-Zoroastrian faction in Greater Iran an Indo-Āryan foreign resident group)[36], it remains to be proven that these dissident Indo-Āryans made way for Zoroastrian hegemony in Iran by moving out, and more specifically by moving to India, somewhat like Moses taking the Israelites out of Egypt. There is neither scriptural nor archaeological evidence for such a scenario: the normal course of events would be assimilation by the dominant group, and the only emigration from Iranian territory (if it had already been Iranianized) by Indo-Āryans that we know of, is the movement of the Mitannic and Kassite Indo-Āryans from the southern Caspian area into Mesopotamia and even as far as Palestine.

In the Dashli building, Asko Parpola recognized a *tripura* such as have been described in the *Ved*ic literature as the strongholds with three circular concentric walls of the *Dāsa* s or *Asura*s (*Asura/Ahura* worshippers), which Parpola himself has identified elsewhere as Iranians.[37] So, chances are that the *Soma*-holding fire-altars, like the *tripura* structures around them, in both Togolok and Dashli, were Iranian. Parpola makes this conclusion even more compelling when he informs us that a similar building in Kutlug-Tepe "demonstrates that the tradition of building forts with three concentric walls survived in Bactria until Achaemenid times"[38] - when the region was undoubtedly Iranian.

Moreover, Parpola points out details in the *Ved*ic descriptions of the *tripura*-holding *Dāsa*s and *Asura*s which neatly fit the Bactrian culture, the *Ṛg-Veda* "places the *Dāsa* strongholds (...) in the mountainous area"[39], which is what Afghanistan looks like to people from the Gaṅgā-Saraswatī-Indus plains; it speaks of "a hundred forts" of the *Dāsa*, while the *Ved*ic Āryans themselves "are never said to have anything but fire or rivers as their 'forts'. The later *Ved*ic texts confirm this by stating that when the *Asura*s and *Deva*s

[35] Our knowledge of the Mazdean use of *Haoma* is chiefly based on the so-called *Hom Yasht*, included in the *Avesta* as *Yaśna* 9, 10 and 11:1-12. The common belief that Zarathushtra opposed the use of *Haoma* is based on *Yaśna* 48:10 ("When will men shun the *mūthra*/urine of this intoxication?") and on *Yaśna* 32:14, where a positive reference to an intoxicant is put in the mouth of evil people. But in neither case is the term *Haoma* effectively used, and so, Zarathushtra's rejection of *Haoma* is disputed.

[36] Thomas Burrow: "The Proto-Indoaryans", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1973, cited with approval by Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 232.

[37] Asko Parpola: "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dasas", in *Studia Orientalia*, vol.64 (Helsinki 1988), p. 212-215, with reference to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6:3:3:24-25; and: "The problem of the Aryans and the Soma: textual-linguistic and archaeological evidence", in G. Erdosy: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 368ff.

[38] Asko Parpola, *ibid.* p. 368.

[39] Asko Parpola, *ibid.* p. 368.

were fighting, the *Asura*s always won in the beginning, because they alone had forts. (...) The *Ṛg-Ved*ic Āryans described their enemy as rich and powerful, defending their cattle, gold and wonderful treasures with sharp weapons, horses and chariots. This description fits the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex in Bactria, with its finely decorated golden cups, weapons with ornamental animal figurines including the horse, and trumpets indicative of chariot warfare."[40]

This may pose a chronological problem to those who consider the *Ṛg-Veda* as pre-Bronze Age, or perhaps not, e.g. Parpola notes that the term *tripura* was "unknown to the *Ṛg-Veda*" and only appears later, "in the *Brāhmāṇa* texts"[41] which non-invasionists date to the high Harappan period, contemporaneous with the Bactrian Bronze Age culture. At any rate, it affirms in so many words that the Bactrian Bronze Age culture was *Dāsa* or *Asura*, terms which Parpola had identified with "the carriers of the Bronze Age culture of Greater Iran".[42] It also constitutes a challenge to those who make India the Urheimat of IE or at least of Indo-Iranian: if the presumed *tripura*s are a distinctly *Dāsa*/Iranian element, identified as such in *Ved*ic literature, and if the *Ved*ic Āryans fought the *Dāsa*s in India, should we not be able to find some tripuras in India too? Or did the Iranians only develop them after leaving India but while still waging occasional wars on the Indian border?

5.3.5 Were the Bactrians Indo-Āryans?

Other artefacts in Dashli have the same Iranian/Indo-Āryan ambiguity with a preference for the Iranian alternative. A vase in Dashli shows a scene with men wearing a kind of shirt leaving one shoulder uncovered. In this, Sergent recognizes the *upanayana* ceremony, in which a youngster is invested with the sacred shirt or thread.[43] But this is both a *Ved* ic and a Zoroastrian ritual, with the latter resembling the depicted scene more closely: in India, only a thread is given, but among Zoroastrians, it is an actual shirt.

Some vases display horned snakes or dragons carrying one or more suns inside of them: according to Sergent, this refers to an Indo-Iranian dragon myth, attested in slightly greater detail in the *Ṛg-Veda* than in the *Avesta* (but what else would you expect, with *Ved*ic literature being much larger, older and better preserved than the *Avesta*n corpus?), about *Indra* liberating the sun by slaying the dragon *Vṛtra*, or in the *Avesta*, *Keresaspa* killing the snake *Azhi Srvara*, "the horned one".[44] The sources which drew his attention to this

[40] Asko Parpola, *ibid.* p. 368.

[41] Asko Parpola, *ibid.* p - 369.

[42] Asko Parpola: "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dasas", *Studia Orientalia*, vol.64, p. 224.

[43] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 163.

[44] *Ṛg-Veda* 1:51:4, 1:54:6, discussed in B. Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 163-164. Incidentally, the iconography is not unlike the classical Chinese dragons, so this may be yet another IE contribution to Chinese culture. Moreover, the symbolism of the dragon swallowing the sun and getting forced to release it again also returns in Babylonian astrological symbolism: till today, the lunar nodes (intersection points of the lu-

picture, both Soviet and French, are agreed that it is specifically Iranian.[45] What Sergent adds is only that, like with the fire cult, it could just as well be Indo-Āryan; but that does not amount to proof of its Indo-Āryan rather than Iranian identity.

Several depictions (statuettes, seals) of a fertility goddess associated with watery themes have been found. Sergent points out that they are unrelated to Mesopotamian mythology but closely related to the "Indo-Iranian" goddess known in India as *Saraswatī*, in Iran as *Anahita*. Which shall it be in this particular case, Iranian or Indian, *Avesta*n or *Ved* ic? Sergent himself adds that the closest written description corresponding to the visual iconography in question is found in *Yasht* 5 of the *Avesta*.[46]

Of course we must remain open to new interpretations and new findings. In this field, confident assertions can be overruled the same day by new discoveries. But if Sergent himself, all while advocating an Indo-Āryan interpretation of the known Bactrian findings, is giving us so many hints that their identity is uncertain at best, and otherwise more likely Iranian than Indo-Āryan, we should have no reason to disbelieve him. On the strength of the data he offers, the safest bet is that the Bactrian Bronze Age culture was the centre of Iranian culture.

This happens to agree with the evidence of Zoroastrian scripture, which has dialectal features pointing to the northeast of the historical Iranian linguistic space (i.e. including Iran proper, which was in fact a late addition to the Iranian speech area), meaning Bactria, and which specifically locates Zarathushtra in Bahlika/Balkh, a town in northern Afghanistan or Bactria. It tallies with the list of regions in the opening chapter of the *Vendidad*, corresponding to Bactria, Sogdia, Margiana, southern Afghanistan and northwestern India, which happens to put Balkh practically in the geographical centre. Iran proper was Iranianized only well after Zarathushtra's preaching. As Sergent notes, in ca. 1900 BC, the Namazga culture in Turkmenistan changes considerably taking in the influence of the then fast-expanding Bactria-Margiana culture:[47] the Iranians were moving from their historical heartland westward into the south-Caspian area. From there, but again only after a few more centuries, they were to colonize Kurdistan/Media and Fars/Persia, where their kingdoms were to flourish into far-flung empires in the 1st millennium BC.

It is only logical that the dominant religious tradition in a civilization is the one developed in its demographic and cultural metropolis: the *Veda* in the Saraswatī basin, the *Avesta* in the Oxus basin, i.e. Bactria. That Bactria did have the status of a metropolis is suggested by Sergent's own description of its Bronze Age culture as "one of the most brilliant in Asia". Though provincial compared with Harappa, it was a worthy metropolis to the somewhat less polished Iranian civilization.

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nar orbit and the ecliptic), where solar and lunar eclipses take place, are called Dragon's Head and Dragon's Tail.

[45] Reference is to Russian articles from the 1970s by Viktor Sarianidi and by I. S. Masimof, and to Marie-Hélène Pottier: *Matériel Funéraire de la Bactriane Méridionale à l'Age du Bronze*, Paris 1984, p. 82ff.

[46] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 163.

[47] *ibid.* p. 179.

5.3.6 Clarions of the Āryan invaders

Another distinctively Āryan innovation attested in Dashli was the trumpet: "Bactria has yielded a number of trumpets; some others had been found earlier in Tepe Hissar and Astrabad (northeastern Iran); Roman Ghirshman proposed to connect these instruments with the use of the horse, with the Iranian cavalry manoeuvring to the sound of the clarion. (...) In ancient India, the trumpet is not mentioned in the written sources".[48] Would it not be logical if the same type of cavalry manoeuvres had yielded the Āryans both Iran and India? In that case, we should have encountered some references to clarions in the *Veda*s. But no, as per Sergent's own reading, the *Ṛg-Veda*, supposedly the record of Āryan settlement in India, knows nothing of trumpets; though post-Harappan depictions of riders with trumpets are known.

All this falls into place if we follow the chronology given by K. D. Sethna and other Indian dissidents: the *Ṛg-Veda* was not younger but older than the Bronze Age and the heyday of Harappa. So, the trumpet was invented in the intervening period, say 3,000 BC, and then used in the subsequent Iranian conquest of Bactria, Margiana and Iran.

The comparatively recent migration into Iran of the Iranians, who supposedly covered the short distance from the Volga mouth to Iran in the 3rd or 2nd millennium BC (losing the wayward Indo-Āryans along the way), has not been mapped archaeologically, in contrast with the successive Kurgan expansion waves into Europe. Jean Haudry reports optimistically: "Since the late 3rd millennium BC, an undecorated black pottery appears in Tepe Hissar (Turkmenistan), together with violin-shaped female idols and esp. with bronze weapons, the horse and the war chariots, and - a detail of which R. Ghirshman has demonstrated the importance - the clarion, indispensable instrument for collective chariot maneuvers. We can follow them from a distance on their way to the south."[49] But as we shall see, this is not necessarily the entry of "the" Iranians into Iran, and even if it is, it does not prove the Kurgan area to be the starting-point of their journey.

In the account of Roman Ghirshman and Jean Haudry, the proto-Iranians with their clarions travelled "to the south". Rather than Indo-Iranians on their way from South Russia to Iran and partly to India, these may just as well be the Iranians on their way from India, via the Aral Lake area, to Iran and Mesopotamia, where they show up in subsequent centuries. Indeed, viewed from Iran, entrants from Russia and from India would come through the same route, viz. from the Aral Lake southward. A look at the map suffices to show the improbability of any other route from India to Iran: rather than to go in a straight line across the mountains, substantial groups of migrants would follow the far more hospitable route through the fertile Oxus valley to the Aral Lake area, and then proceed south from there.

On the other hand, migrations from Iran northward are also attested. Against the

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[48] *ibid.* p. 162.

[49] J. Haudry: *Les Indo-Européens*, p. 1 18, with reference to R. Ghirshman: *L'Iran et les Migrations des Indo-Āryans et des Iranians* (1977).

theory of a southward migration of the Iranians from the Aral-Caspian area into Iran, P. Bosch-Gimpera proposes that the Iranians came from South Russia via the Caucasus into Iran and thence to what is now Turkestan: "The acknowledged penetration of the Iranians into Turkestan, where they arrived as far as Khorezm (...) must have taken place, on the contrary, from Iran itself, around 1000 BC." [50] While he is wrong in describing the group migrating northward from Iran as "the" Iranians, the migration to which he draws attention confirms that Central Asia was a vast space which nomadic groups, mostly Iranian-speaking, crisscrossed in all directions. [51]

Thus, in the 3rd century BC, there was a Parthian migration which resulted in the enthronement of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty in Iran, where they became formidable enemies to the Roman armies. [52] From Chinese as well as Roman sources, it has been deduced that the Parthians had been living in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya regions. In present-day Turkmenistan, the Parthian town of Nisa has been excavated, which bears testimony to their impressive culture. If only for the sake of colourfulness, I would like to draw attention to the theory of Philip Lozinski, who considers the Nisa area but a stage in a much longer migration: "All this leads me to suggest that the seat of the Parthians, first recorded in written sources, the Parthau-nisa, was in the region of the upper Irtysh river in Siberia. The whole region must have been well populated, flourishing and highly civilized. The archaeological remains recorded in modern times give ample evidence to this effect. Furthermore the very close parallel between the actual finds and the description of the Western, barbarians by the Chinese makes it highly likely that this was the region the Chinese had in mind. They were remarkably accurate: their descriptions of gold mines, irrigation systems, iron bridges, glass in the windows of palaces, the jewelled personal decorations of the aristocracy, and other regalia which caught their attention, correspond to actual remains in Siberia." [53]

Such a migration from Siberia to western Iran, all within the Iranian speech area, certainly gives an idea of what migrations could take place within the vast expanse of Central Asia. This type of migration has occurred many times in the preceding millennia (as well as in the subsequent centuries with the Turkic and Mongol conquests); it would be very easy for archaeologists to mistake such an intra-Iranian migration for the momentous

[50] P. Bosch-Gimpera: "The Migration Route of the Indo-Aryans", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1974, p. 515.

[51] "From Hungary to China", the Iranian-speaking nomads generically known as Scythians filled up the entire space of the steppe lands, vide Natalia Polosmak & Francis van Noten: "Les Scythes de I'Alta", *La Recherche*, May 1995, p. 524-530.

[52] According to Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann: *The Penguin Atlas of World History*, 1979, p. 69, the Parthians were equated in Greco-Roman accounts with a Scythian tribe called the *Parni*, i.e. Greek *Parnoi* equated by Asko Parpola with the hostile *Panis* mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda*, in G. Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 367.

[53] B. Philip Lozinski: *The Original Homeland of the Parthians*, Mouton & Co, The Hague 1959; p. 54. The Roman writer Ammianus Marcellinus (XXIII, 6, 43) is quoted as mentioning that "to the north of Persia are Parthians dwelling in lands abounding in snow and frost".

entry of the Āryans. There is as yet no firm archaeological proof for the original migration of the first Iranians and Indians in any direction through Central Asia, at least it has not been identified in the relative wealth of separate archaeological findings attesting numerous different migrations. Even in Bernard Sergent's erudite book, I have not found any data which compel us to accept that a particular culture can be identified with the very first Indo-Iranian wave of migrants; nor any data which are incompatible with the scenario of an original Iranian migration from India via the Oxus basin to the Caspian area and Iran proper.

5.3.7 Bactrian invasion into India

Thus far, the archaeological argument advanced by some scholars in favour of an Āryan invasion into India has not been very convincing.

Consider e.g. this circular reasoning by Prof. Romila Thapar: "In Haryana and the western Gaṅgā plain, there was an earlier Ochre Colour Pottery going back to about 1500 BC or some elements of the Chalcolithic cultures using Black-and-Red Ware. Later in about 800 BC there evolved the Painted Grey Ware culture. The geographical focus of this culture seems to be the Doab, although the pottery is widely distributed across northern Rajasthan, Panjab, Haryana and western U. P. None of these post-Harappan cultures, identifiable by their pottery, are found beyond the Indus.Yet this would be expected if 'the Āryans' were a people indigenous to India with some diffusion to Iran, and if the attempt was to find archaeological correlates for the affinities between Old Indo-Āryan and Old *Avestan*." [54]

Firstly, if no common pottery type is found in Iran and India in 1500-800 BC, and if this counts as proof that no migration from India to Iran took place, then it also proves that no migration from Iran to India took place. In particular, the Painted Grey Ware, long identified with the Indo-Āryans, cannot be traced to Central Asia; if it belonged to Āryans, then not to Āryan invaders. So, if substantiated, Prof. Thapar's statement is actually an argument against an Āryan invasion in ca. 1500 BC.

Secondly, if the absence of migration in either direction in the period from 1500 BC onwards is really proven, then this only disproves the Āryan migration if one stays with the assumption that the Āryan migration (whether into or out of India) took place around 1500 BC. But that assumption is precisely part of (the textbook version of) the AIT which Prof. Thapar has set out to prove. The archaeological data which she mentions, assuming they can prove the absence of migrations in 1500 BC and later, are not at all in conflict with the theory that Indo-Europeans emigrated from India anytime between 6000 and 2000 BC.

In spite of the impression created in popular literature, archaeology has by no means demonstrated that there was an Āryan immigration into India. Even the new levels in accuracy do not affect the following *status quaestionis* of the Āryan Invasion theory: "The

[54] R. Thapar: "The Perennial Aryans", *Seminar*, December 1992.

question of Indo-European migrations into the subcontinent of India can, at best, be described as enigmatic."[55] Thus, among those who assume the Āryan Invasion, there is no consensus on when it took place, and some AIT archaeologists alter the chronology so much that the theory comes to mean the opposite of what it is usually believed to mean, viz. an affirmation of Āryan dominance in Harappa rather than an Āryan destruction of Harappa: "[This] episode of elite dominance which brought the Indo-Āryan branch of the Indo-European family to India (...) may have been as early as the floruit of the Indus civilization (...)"[56]

Enter Bernard Sergent. He builds on a corpus of findings (some of them already used by Asko Parpola) pertaining to the apparent entry of elements from the Bactrian Bronze Age culture into late- and post-Harappan northwestern India. He also offers a theory of how these Bactrians may have caused the downfall of the Harappan civilization, parallel with the contemporaneous crisis in civilizations in Central and West Asia.

5.3.8 Why Harappa suffered decline

Civilization and urbanization are closely related to commerce, exchange, colonization of mining areas, and other socioeconomic processes which presuppose communications and transport. When communication and transport cease, we see cultures suffer terrible decline, e.g. the Tasmanian aboriginals (exterminated by the British settlers), living in splendid isolation for thousands of years, had lost many of the skills which mankind had developed in the Stone Age, including the art of making fire. One of the reasons why the Eurasian continent won out against Africa and the Americas in the march of progress, was the fairly easy and well-developed contact between the different civilizations of Europe, Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China. So, one can force decline on a culture by cutting off its trade routes, a tactic routinely used for short periods (hence only with limited long-term effect) in wartime, but which seems to have troubled the ancient civilizations in ca. 2000 BC with devastating effect for several centuries. It was in reaction to this destabilization of international trade links that the civilizational centres started budding empires by the mid-2nd millennium, e.g. the Kassite empire in Mesopotamia where there had been city-states (Ur, Uruk, Isin, Larsa, etc.) prior to the great crisis.

Or so Sergent says. Dismissing the thesis of a climatological crisis (proposed in the case of the Harappan decline but also in the case of West-Asian cultures), he argues that only an economic crisis can explain the simultaneous decline of cities in widely different locations, some near rivers and some on hills, some in densely populated agglomerations and some overlooking thinly populated steppes or mountain areas, some in hot and some in colder areas. The ones to blame are - who else? - the *Āryans*. They, and "specifically

[55] David G. Zanotti: "Another Aspect of the Indo-European Question: a Response to P. Bosch-Gimpera", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1975/3, p. 255-270, spec. p. 260.

[56] C. Renfrew: "Before Babel: Speculations on the Origins of Linguistic Diversity", *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 1 (1), p. 3-23, spec. p. 14.

Indo-Āryans" [57], played a role in the Hurrian and Kassite invasions disrupting Mesopotamia (while the IE or non-IE identity of the Guti and Lullubi invaders remains unknown, though attempts are made to link the Guti with the Tokharians); and from Bactria, they by themselves disrupted the economy of the Indus-Saraswatī civilization.

They didn't physically destroy the Harappan cities, as Mortimer Wheeler and others of his generation thought: "No trace of destruction has been observed in these cities." [58] But by creating insecurity for the travelling traders, they bled and suffocated the economy which made city life possible; and thus forced the Harappans to abandon their cities and return to a pre-urban lifestyle. The declining and fragmented Harappan country and society then fell an easy prey to the Indo-Āryan invaders from Bactria.

This scenario has been attested in writing in the case of Mesopotamia. Sergent quotes other experts to the effect that "from ca. 2230 BC, (...) the Guti had cut off the roads, ruined the countryside, set the cities on fire" [59] etc., that the Assyrian trade system was disrupted by the Mitannic people, etc. But is there similar evidence for the Indus-Saraswatī civilization?

Sergent cites findings that in the final stage of Mohenjo Daro, we see the large mansions of the rich subdivided into small apartments for the poor, the water supply system neglected, the roads and houses no longer following the plan. [60] This certainly marks a decline, the rich losing their power and the powerful losing their control and resources. Same story in Harappa, Chanhu Daro, Kalibangan, Lothal: a great loss of quality in architecture and organization in the last phase. Moreover, all traces of long-distance trade disappear (just as in Mesopotamia, all signs of commerce with "Meluhha"/Sindh disappear by 2000 BC), and trade is the basis of city life. So, "these cities didn't need to be destroyed: they had lost their reason for existing, and were vacated". [61] But that doesn't bring the Bactrians or Indo-Āryans into the picture.

5.3.9 Āryan settlements in India

To Bernard Sergent, the "strategic" key to the Āryan invasion puzzle has been provided by the discovery, by a French team in 1968, of the post-Harappan town of Pirak, near the Bolan pass and near Mehrgarh in Baluchistan. Pirak was a new settlement dating back only to the 18th century BC. Culturally it was closely related to the societies to its north

[57] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 198-199. On p. 206 ff., Sergent adds some new data about the large IE and specifically Indo-Āryan presence in West Asia. Indo-Āryan names are quite common in Syria and Palestine in the 15th-13th century BC, e.g. the Palestian town of Sichem was ruled by one *Birishena*, i.e. *Vira-sena*, "the one who has an army of heroes", and Qiltu near Jerusalem was ruled by one *Suar-data*, i.e. "gift of Heaven". To Sergent, this also proves that the Indo-Āryans maintained a separate existence after and outside the Mitannic kingdom until at least the 13th century BC.

[58] *ibid.* p. 201.

[59] *ibid.* p. 199, quoting Paul Garelli: *Le Proche-Orient Asiatique*, PUF. Paris 1969. p. 89-93..

[60] *ibid.* p. 200.

[61] *ibid.* p. 201.

and west, especially Bactria. Sergent sums up a long list of precise material items which Pirak had in common with those non-Indian regions, and specifies in some cases that the artefacts are attested earlier in other sites than in Pirak.[62] So, this was a settlement of foreign newcomers bringing some foreign culture with them.

Sergent will certainly convince many readers by asserting that in Pirak, "the horse makes its appearance in India, both through bones and in figurines", and this "connotes without any possible doubt the arrival in India of the first Indo-European-speaking populations".[63] That depends entirely on how much we make of the limited but real evidence of horses in the Harappan civilization. Note moreover that while the horse was important to the Indo-Āryans, the Bactrian two-humped camel was not; but in Pirak, both camel and horse are conspicuous, both in skeletal remains and in depictions.

If the Bactrian culture and those to its west were Iranian-speaking, which is likely, then Pirak is simply an Iranian settlement in an Indian border region, a southward extension of the Bactrian culture. Indo-Iranian borders have been fluctuating somewhat for millennia, while different groups of Iranians down to Nadir Shah have again and again tried to invade India, so the Iranian intrusion in Pirak (which may have ended up assimilated into its Indo-Āryan environment) need not be the momentous historical breakthrough which it is to Sergent. It would only be that if it can be shown that the Pirak innovations are repeated in many North-Indian sites in the subsequent centuries, where we know that the dominant culture was Indo-Āryan.

A related culture is the Cemetery H culture on the outskirts of Harappa itself. Sergent offers a detail which is distinctly non-*Ved*ic and Mazdean (Zoroastrian): "The dead, represented by unconnected skulls and bones, were placed, *after exposure*, in big jars".[64] Exposure to birds and insects is still the first stage in the Zoroastrian disposal of the dead. Sergent also reports that the influence of the native Harappan civilization is much greater here than in Pirak. So, as the Iranian invaders moved deeper inland, they soon lost their distinctiveness. Considering that Afghan dynasties have ruled parts of India as far east as Bengal, using Persian and building in a West-Asian style, this post-Harappan Iranian intrusion as far as the Indus riverside is not that impressive.

Indeed, from the Indus eastwards, we lose track of this Bactrian invasion. Sergent himself admits as much: "For the sequel, archaeology offers little help. The diggings in India for the 2nd millennium BC reveal a large number of regional cultures, generally rather poor, and to decree what within them represents the Indo-Āryan or the indigenous contribution would be arbitrary. If Pirak (...) represents the start of Indian culture, there is in the present state of Indian archaeology no 'post-Pirak' except at Pirak itself, which lasted till the 7th century BC: the site remained, along with a few very nearby ones, isolated."[65] So, the Bactrian invaders who arrived through the Bolan pass and established

[62] *ibid.* p. 219ff.
[63] *ibid.* p. 221.
[64] *ibid.* p. 224; emphasis added.
[65] *ibid.* p. 246-247.

themselves in and around the border town of Pirak, never crossed the Indus.

This confirms the statement by the much-maligned (by Sergent, that is)[66] American archaeologist Jim Shaffer that "no material culture is found to move from west to east across the Indus"[67], or more academically, that the demographic eastward shift of the Harappan population during the decline of their cities, i.e. an intra-Indian movement from Indus to Gaṅgā, "is the only archaeologically documented west-to-east movement of human populations in South Asia before the first half of the first millennium BC", while the archaeological record shows "no significant discontinuities" for the period when the Āryan invasion should have made its mark.[68] The Āryan invasion of India has somehow gone missing from the archaeological record.

5.3.10 Scriptural evidence

To fortify his reconstruction of the Āryan invasion, Bernard Sergent repeates some well-known scriptural references. Indian authors are right in pointing out that this is systematically the weakest part in AIT argumentations, as the knowledge of *Ved*ic literature among Western scholars is either too limited or too distorted by AIT presuppositions. Sergent's arguments at this point repeat well-known claims about the contents of the *Veda*s. Thus, the *Ṛg-Veda* was written by foreigners because it doesn't know the tiger nor rice nor "the domesticated elephant which existed in the Harappan Indus culture".[69]

As for the tiger, it is often said that India was divided in a lion zone in the west and a tiger zone in the rest. This image persists in the symbolism of the civil war in Sri Lanka: the Sinhalese, originating in Gujarat (the last place in India where lions exist even today), have the lion as their symbol, while the separatists among the Tamils, originating in southeastern India, call themselves the Tigers. However, to judge from the Harappan seal imagery, tigers did originally exist in the Saraswatī and Indus basins as well, overlapping with the lion zone. As Sir Monier Monier-Williams notes, in the *Atharva-Veda*, "*vyāghra*/tiger is often mentioned together with the lion".[70] It is simply impossible that the *Ṛg-Ved*ic seers, even if they were unaware of the Gaṅgā basin (*quod non*), had never heard of tigers.

As for the domesticated elephant, if it was known in Harappa, does anyone seriously suggest that it was not known in the same area in subsequent centuries? While regression in knowledge and technology does sometimes happen, there is no reason whatsoever why people who could domesticate elephants would have lost this useful skill, which is not dependent on foreign trade or urbanization, when the Harappan cities declined. If the *Ved*ic Āryans had settled in India, it is impossible that they didn't know domesticated

[66] *ibid.* p. 155 155 ("the worst is achieved by Jim Shaffer" with his "bad faith"), 477 ("manipulations in which Jim Shaffer indulges, consisting in starkly ignoring the linguistic evidence").

[67] Personal communication during the 1996 Indus-Saraswatī conference in Atlanta GA.

[68] Jim G. Shaffer and Diane A. Lichtenstein: "The concepts of 'cultural tradition' and 'palaeoethnicity' in South-Asian archaeology", in G. Erdosy, ed.: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 139-140.

[69] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 241.

[70] M. Monier-Willams: *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 1036, entry *vyāghra*.

elephants; they need not have mentioned everything they knew in their *Ved*ic hymns. At any rate, the actual reading of *Ved*ic information has so far been the weakest arrow in the invasionists' quiver, and I wouldn't take their word for it that the domesticated elephant is indeed absent from the *Ṛg-Veda*. Isn't the specification "wild elephant"[71] an indication that they also knew non-wild elephants? Isn't the mention of how "the people deck him like a docile king of elephants"[72] a reference to the Hindu custom of taking adorned domesticated elephants in pageants?

Rice, according to Sergent himself, made its appearance in the Indus basin in the late Harappan period, and was known to the Bactrian invaders in Pirak.[73] He identifies those Bactrian invaders as the *Ved*ic Āryans, so why haven't they mentioned rice in their *Ṛg-Veda*? One simple answer would be that the *Ṛg-Veda* is pre-Harappan, composed at a time and in a place where rice was not yet cultivated. This chronological correction solves a lot of similar arguments from silence. Thus, there was cotton in Harappa and after, but no cotton in the *Ṛg-Veda*. Bronze sword were used aplenty in the Bactrian culture and in Pirak, but are not mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda* (a short knife can be made from soft metals like gold or copper, but a sword requires advanced bronze or iron metallurgy).[74] Camels were part of the Bactrian culture and its Pirak offshoot, but are not mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda* except for its rather late 8th book, which mentions Bactria, possibly in the period when the early Harappans were setting up mining colonies there such as Shortugai. It all falls into place when the *Ṛg-Veda* is considered as pre-Harappan.

For a very different type of scriptural evidence, Sergent sees a synchronism between the archaeologically attested settlement of Pirak and the beginning of the *Purāṇ*ic chronology, which in his view goes back to the 17th century BC, in "remarkable coincidence" with the florescence of Pirak.[75] Reference is in fact to Kalhana's *Rājataranginị̄*, which starts a dynastic lists of kings of Kashmir in 1882, i.e. the early 19th century BC.[76] But if Kalhana can be a valid reference, what about Kalhana's dating the *Mahābhārata* war to the 25th century BC? If *Purāṇ*ic history is any criterion, Sergent should realize that its lists of Āryan kings for other parts of India than Kashmir go way beyond 2,000 BC.

Another classic scriptural reference concerns everything relating to the enemies of the *Ved*ic Āryans, such as the "aboriginal" *Dāsa*s. Very aptly, Sergent identifies the *Dāsa*s and

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[71] *Ṛg-Veda* 1:64:7 and 8:33:8.

[72] *Ṛg-Veda* 9:57:3, thus translated by Ralph Griffith: *The Hymns of the Ṛg-Veda*, p. 488.

[73] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 230.

[74] Ralph Griffith uses "sword" twice in his translation *The Hymns of the Ṛg-Veda*, p. 25 (1:37:2) and p. 544 (10:20:6), both already in the younger part of the *Ṛg-Veda*, but in the index on p. 702 he corrects himself, specifying that "knife" or "dagger" would be more appropriate. Likewise, the core stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, the ones most likely to stay close to the original versions even in their material details (unlike the many sideshows woven into these epics, often narrating much more recent events), feature only primitive weapons: *Rāma*'s bow and arrow, *Hanumān*'s club.

[75] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 223.

[76] *ibid.* p. 541 n.100, with secondary reference to R. Morton Smith: "The Indian Sennachy", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1978, p. 77-91.

the *Panis* as Iranians, and the Pakthas (one of the tribes confronting the *Ved*ic king *Sudas* in the Battle of the Ten Kings) as the Iranian Pathans.[77] Yet he doesn't identify these tribes with the Bronze Age Bactrians, arguing that in Alexander's time, Greek authors locate the *Parnoi* and Dahai just south of the Aral Lake. But that was almost two thousand years after the heyday of the Bactrian Bronze Age culture and arguably even longer after the *Ṛg-Veda*. The only mystery is that these ethnonyms managed to survive that long, not that during those long centuries, they could migrate a few hundred miles to the northwest - centuries during which we know for fact that the Iranians expanded westward from their Bactrian heartland across rivers and mountains to settle as far west as Mesopotamia.

Moreover, the *Veda*s locate the confrontations in the prolonged hostility between Indo-Āryans and Iranians not on the Saraswatī (which could in theory be identified as the homonymous Harahvaiti/Helmand in Afghanistan)[78], but on the riverside of the Parushni/ Ravi and other Panjab rivers, unambiguously in India. This is only logical if the *Ved*ic Āryans were based in the Saraswatī basin and their Iranian enemies were based in an area to their west (western Panjab, Khyber pass): they confronted halfway in eastern Panjab. So not only did these Iranian tribes move from Bactria to the Aral Lake area in 2000-300 BC, but they had started moving northwestward centuries earlier, in the *Ṛg-Ved*ic period, in Panjab.

With every invasionist attempting to strengthen his case by appealing to the testimony of Hindu scripture, the collective failure becomes more glaring.

5.3.11 Comparison with archaeological reconstruction in Europe

The westward expansion of the Kurgan culture has been mapped with some degree of accuracy: "If an archaeologist is set the problem of examining the archaeological record for a cultural horizon that is both suitably early and of reasonable uniformity to postulate as the common prehistoric ancestor of the later Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, Slavic, and possibly some of the Indo-European languages of Italy, then the history of research indicates that the candidate will normally be the Corded Ware culture. At about 3200-2300 BC this Corded Ware horizon is sufficiently early to predate the emergence of any of the specific proto-languages. In addition, it is universally accepted as the common component if not the very basis of the later Bronze Age cultures that are specifically identified with the different proto-languages. Furthermore, its geographical distribution from Holland and Switzerland on the west across northern and central Europe to the upper Volga and middle Dniepr encompasses all those areas which [have been] assigned as the "homelands" of these European proto-languages."[79]

[77] *ibid.* p. 241-244. He specifically rejects the common belief that the *Dāsa*s were , in spite of their occasional description as "black-covered" or "from a black womb", pointing out that even the fair-haired and white-skinned Vikings were called the "black foreigners" by the Irish, with "black" purely used as a metaphor for "evil".

[78] *ibid.* p. 242

[79] J. P. Mallory: *In Search of the Indo-Europeans*, Hudson & Hudson, London 1989, p. 108.

This is a very important insight for understanding the large common (partly pre-IE substratal) element in the European IE languages, distinguishing them collectively from Anatolian, Tokharic and Indo-Iranian: "The study of the lexicon of the Northern European languages, especially Germanic and Baltic, reveals that a large number of terms relevant to the ecology of the habitat of the early populations of the area and to their socioeconomic activities have no plausible Indo-European etymology. (...) it is possible to ascribe to the pre-Indo-European substrate in the Baltic area a number of names of plants, animals, objects and activities characteristic of the Neolithic cultures." [80] Many of these terms also extend to Celtic, Slavic and sometimes Italic and Greek.

Examples include the words *barley*, Russian *bor* ("millet"), Latin *far* ("spelt"); Irish *tuath*, Gothic *thiuda*, "people", whence the ethnic names Dutch/Deutsch; German *wahr*, Latin *verus*, Old Irish *fir*, "true"; Latin *granum*, Dutch *koren*, English *grain* and *corn*; Lithuanian *puodas*, Germanic *fata*, whence Dutch *vat*, "vessel"; Dutch *delven*, "dig", Old Prussian (Baltic) *dalptan*, "piercing-tool"; Old Irishland, Old Prussian *lindan*, Germanic *land*; Latin *alnus* (< alisnos), Dutch *els*, Lithuanian *elksnis*, "alder", also related to Greek *aliza*, "white poplar"; Dutch *smaak*, "taste", Gothic *smakka*, "fig, tasty fruit", Lithuanian *smaguricu*, "sweet, treat"; from an ancient form **londhwos*, Dutch *lenden*, Latin *lumbus*, "waist". Likewise, the Germanic words fish, apple, oak, beech, whale, goat, elm, (n)adder have counterparts in other European languages, e.g. Latin *piscis*, Old Irish *aball*, Greek *aig-ilops* or *krat-aigos* (possibly related to Berber *iksir*, Basque *eskur*) [81], Latin *fagus*, *squalus*, *haedus*, *ulmus*, *natrix*, but they have no attested counterparts in the Asian IE languages. [82]

Archaeology and linguistics reinforce each other in indicating the existence of a second centre of IE dispersal in the heart of Europe, the Corded Ware culture of ca. 3000 BC, whence most European branches of IE parted for their historical habitats.

Even earlier demographic and cultural movements have been mapped with convincing accuracy. The sudden apparition of full-fledged Neolithic culture in the Low Countries in about 5100 BC can clearly be traced to a gradual expansion of the agricultural civilization through Hungary (5700 BC) and southern Germany (5350 BC), from the Balkans and ultimately from Anatolia. [83] It is this gradual spread of agriculture and its concomitant changes in life-style (houses, tools, ceramics, domesticated animals) which the leading

[80] Edgar C. Polomié: "The Indo-Europeanization of Northern Europe: the Linguistic Evidence", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, fall 1990, p. 331-337.

[81] Suggested by Xavier Delamarre: *Le Vocabulaire Indo-Européen*, Maisonneuve, Paris 1984, p. 167.

[82] Remark that they are all terms of flora and fauna, the typical substratum vocabulary in an immigrant language. Common developments within the pan-IE vocabulary also set the European languages apart, e.g. from *sus*, "pig", the derivative *su-in-o*, "swine", is attested in Latin, Greek, Baltic, Slavic and Germanic; from **ker-*, "horn", the derivative **kerew-*, "deer", strictly "the horned one" (still attested in its literal meaning in Avestan, *srvara*, as epithet of a horned dragon, but in the European languages a paraphrase like Sanskrit *hastī*, "the handed one", for "elephant"), is attested in Germanic (Dutch *hert*), Greek. Latin (*cervus*), Celtic and Baltic.

[83] Pierre Bonenfant & Paul-Louis van Berg: "De eerste bewoners van het toekomstige 'België': een etnische overrompeling", in Anne Morelli ed.: *Geschiedenis van het eigen volk*, Kritak, Leuven 1993 (1992), p. 21-36, specifically p. 28.

archaeologist Colin Renfrew has rashly identified as the Indo-Europeanization of Europe, but which Marija Gimbutas and many others would consider as the spread of the pre-IE "Old European" culture.

It remains possible that in some outlying regions, the early Indo-Europeans arrived on the scene in time to capture this movement of expanding agriculture, but it did not originate with them, because Anatolia and the Balkans were demonstrably not the IE Urheimat. On the contrary, in the northeastern Mediterranean, the presence of pre-IE elements in the historically attested IE cultures and languages (Greek, Hittite) is very strong, indicating that the Indo-Europeans had to subdue a numerous and self-confident, culturally advanced population. It is this Old European people, known through towns like Catal HLyLk and VinCa, which gradually spread to the northwest and civilized most of Europe before its Indo-Europeanization.

An even earlier case of demographic-cum-cultural expansion has been identified: "One is astonished by the cultural coherence which manifests during the Middle- and Late-*Magdalénien* (12,000 to 10,000 BC) in a large area reaching from Spain (the Valencia region) to central Czechoslovakia. Everything indicates that this culture has spread fast starting from southwestern France, either by migrations or by cultural exchange between autochthonous tribes. Should one - since at that socio-economic stage there can be no question of political unity - not consider the possibility that this was one large ethnic group? In the entire *Magdalénien* territory, there is (. . .), apart from similarities in tools and way of life, a conspicuous unity in artistic styles and symbolism." [84]

This culture made way for a new cultural wave: "Around 10,000 BC or shortly after, the *Magdalénien* culture comes to an end without any demonstrable reason. This is the end of a civilization. This is clearly visible in the French-Cantabrian region where the places of worship which had been installed in deep caves 8,000 years earlier, were abandoned. In [its northern reaches], the *Magdalénien* culture makes way for cultural currents from the Anglo-Polish plains" [85], a nomadic culture of pioneers living on the rim of the (by then receding) ice-cap. They were the last hunter-gatherer culture in Europe, and their expansion in non-Mediterranean Europe set the stage for the inexorable expansion of the Neolithic Revolution of agriculture from the southeast.

So, that's archaeology in action. Without the benefit of a single written document, several cultural and partly demographic waves have been identified in European prehistory: a Mesolithic wave expanding from the Ur-European population centres in the southwest (probably proto-Basque) before 10,000 BC; a counter-wave from the northeast after 10,000 BC (linguistically unidentified); the wave of agriculture spreading to the farthest corners from the southeast in the 7^{th}-4^{th} millennium BC (linguistically unidentified); and finally the wave of the horse-riding late-Kurganites bringing their IE languages.

There is as yet no parallel map of a Kurgan-to-India migration. Thus, the material rela-

[84] *ibid.* p. 24.
[85] *ibid.* p. 24

tion between the Andronovo culture in Kazakhstan (often considered as the Indo-Iranians freshly emigrated from the Kurgan area) and the Bactria-Margiana culture (presumed to be the Indo-Āryans and the Iranians on their way to India and Iran) has been established only vaguely, certainly not enough to claim that the latter was an offshoot of the former (which the AIT would require). As we saw, even tracing a migration from Bactria across the Indus has not succeeded so far.

But then, neither has a reverse migration been mapped archaeologically. If the Bactrian Bronze Age culture was Iranian and the Iranians had earlier been defeated in India, where is the archaeological trail of the Iranians from India to Bactria? And earlier, where is the evidence of the Proto-Indo-Europeans on their way from India to the Kurgan area? Those who consider India as the Urheimat of IE should suspend their current triumphalism and take up the challenge.

5.4 LINGUISTIC ARGUMENTS

5.4.1 East-Asian influences

Bernard Sergent traces practically all Indian language families to foreign origins. He confirms the East-Asian origins of both the Tibeto-Burmese languages (Lepcha, Naga, Mizo etc.) and the Austro-Asiatic languages (Santal, Munda, Khasi etc.). Though many tribals in central and southern India are the biological progeny of India's oldest human inhabitants, their adopted languages are all of foreign origin. To Sergent, this is true of not only Austro-Asiatic and Indo-Āryan, but also of Dravidian.

The Himālayan branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, distinct from Tibetan, already has a very long but inconspicuous presence in northern India. Originating in China, this group of now very small languages once embraced parts of the northern plains. Of greater historical importance is the Austro-Asiatic family, which Sergent describes as once the predominant one in a continuous area from Central India to Vietnam, but now reduced to a series of pockets in between the riverine population centres dominated by the immigrant Thai and Tibeto-Burmese languages (originating in western and ultimately in northern China) and in India by the Indo-Āryan languages.

He follows those scholars who consider the Central-Indian language isolate Nahali (assumed by its few students to be the original language of the western-Indian Bhils) as also belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family.[86] This view is emphatically not shared by

[86] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 31. The precarious situation of Nahali is described as follows by K. S. Nagaraja, reviewing Robert Parkin: *A Guide to Austro-Asiatic Speakers and Their Languages*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1991, in *Bulletin of the Deccan College* 1996-97, p. 342: "On the basis of my observation after visiting Tembi (Teli) village in November 1996, I can say that the Nahals there no longer speak Nahali language at all. (. . .) in the districts of Buldana in Maharashtra, in the village called Jamud, there is a big concentration of Nahals who actually speak this language (. . .) there are many settlements in the nearby villages where the language is still spoken. The total number of speakers seems to be over three to four thousand."

F. B. J. Kuiper, who lists 123 items of core vocabulary not reducible to Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian or IE roots, and calculates that "about 24 per cent of the Nahali vocabulary has no correspondence whatever in India".[87] If Kuiper is wrong, it would mean that as per the prevalent theories, not a single living language in the subcontinent (except for the peripheral languages Burushaski and Andamanese, at least for now) is indigenous.

Sergent is merely following in others' footsteps when he assumes that *mayūra*, "peacock", *gaja*, "elephant", *karpAsa*, "cotton", and other Sanskrit fauna or flora terms are loans from Austro-Asiatic.[88] In most such cases, the only ground for this assumption is that similar-sounding words exist in the Munda languages of Chotanagpur, languages which have not been committed to writing before the 19th century. Chances are that in the intervening millennia, when these words were attested in Sanskrit but not necessarily in Munda, they were borrowed from Indo-Āryan into Munda, or from an extinct language into both. At any rate, the hypothesis of an Austro-Asiatic origin should only be accepted in case the term is also attested in non-Indian branches such as Khmer.

The alleged loans only start appearing in the 10th and youngest book of the *Ṛg-Veda* and really break through in the *Brāhmāṇa*s. Sergent follows the classical interpretation, viz. that this shows how the *Ved*ic Āryans gradually moved east, encountering the Austro-Asiatic speakers in the Gaṅgā basin. While I am not convinced of the existence of more than a few Munda terms in Sanskrit (more in the adjoining Indo-Āryan Prakrits: Hindi, Bengali, Oriya), I would agree that there are other Munda influences, notably in mythology, as we shall discuss separately. Non-invasionists will have to account for this Munda contribution.

Here too, I suggest that chronology is all-important. It is quite possible that Munda had not arrived in India at the time of the *Ṛg-Veda*. When the Harappans migrated eastward (as demographically expansive populations do), or when the post-Harappans fled eastward from the disaster area which the Indus-Saraswatī basin had become, the Munda-speaking people they encountered in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar may have been re-cent immigrants. All the same, it remains possible that for local flora and fauna, the Indo-Āryans did adopt some Munda terminology.

Broadly, the Austro-Asiatic expansion from the agricultural civilization of Thailand can be compared with the gradual spread of the Old European Neolithic from Anatolia and the Balkans to the far corners of Europe, and with the spread of India's Northwestern Neolithic to the rest of the subcontinent. In that case, the Munda-speaking farmers in the eastern Gaṅgā basin must have assimilated into the Indo-Āryan population, with only the peripheral populations in the hills retaining their imported languages. This Munda contribution is by no means incompatible with a native status of IE, and even Hindu nationalists should welcome it as a factor of national integration across linguistic frontiers.

[87] F. B. J. Kuiper: *Nahali, A Comparative Study*, Amsterdam 1962, p. 49.
[88] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 370.

5.4.2 Is Dravidian native to India?

In one of his most innovative chapters, Sergent reviews all the evidence of Dravido-African and Dravido-Uralic kinship. In African languages spoken in the entire Sahel belt, from Sudan to Senegal, numerous semantic and grammatical elements are found which also exist in Dravidian. The similarity with the Uralic languages (Finnish, Hungarian, Samoyedic) is equally pronounced. Sergent offers the hypothesis that at the dawn of the Neolithic Revolution (start of agriculture, some 10,000 years ago), the Dravidians left the Sudan, one band splitting off in Iran to head north to the Urals, the others entering India and moving south.

Within this scenario of a Dravidian immigration, it is tempting to speculate that upon entering India, the Dravidians first of all founded the Indus civilization. Surprisingly, Sergent rejects this otherwise popular hypothesis, on the impeccably rational ground that there is no evidence for it. Thus, except in coastal Sindh and Gujarat, geographical terms in the Indus-Saraswatī area are never of Dravidian origin. There is also no continuity in material culture between Harappan culture and the oldest known Dravidian settlements.

True to scholarly norms, Sergent pleads for a provisional acceptance of our ignorance about the identity of the Harappans. However, as a concession to impatient readers who insist on having some theory at least, he gives one or two very slender indications that the Burushos (who preserve their Burushaski language till today in Hunza, Pak-Occupied Kashmir) may have played a role in it.[89] However, he finds no Burushaski lexical influence on Indo-Āryan except possibly the word *sinda*, "river", connected in one direction or the other with Sanskrit *Sindhu*, "river, Indus", not otherwise attested in IE.[90] He is also skeptical of David MacAlpin's thesis of an "Elamo-Dravidian" language family: what isoglosses there are between Elamite and Dravidian can be explained sufficiently through contact rather than common origin.

Like many others, Sergent suggests that the early Dravidians can be equated with the "southern Neolithic" of 2500-1600 BC. Their round huts with wooden framework are the direct precursors of contemporary rural Dravidian housing. Two types of Hindu vessel have been discovered in southern Neolithic sites, including a beaked copper recipient still used in *Ved*ic fire ceremonies.[91]

Though the prehistory of the southern Neolithic is difficult to trace, it can be stated with confidence that the best candidate is the Northwestern Neolithic, which started in Mehrgarh in the 8th millennium BC. It is, by contrast, very unlikely that it originated

[89] *ibid.* p. 138.

[90] Remark that the Iranian name *Hindu* for "Indus", hence also for "India", indicates that the Iranians have lived near the Indus. If they had not, then *Sindhu* would have been a foreign term which they would have left intact, just as they kept the Elamite city name *Susa* intact (rather than evolving it to "Huha" or something like that). But because *Sindhu* was part of their own vocabulary, it followed the evolution of Iranian phonetics to become Hindu.

[91] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 48, with reference to Bridget and Raymond Allchin and to Dharma Pal Agrawal.

as an outpost of the Southeast-Asian Neolithic, which expanded into India at a rather late date, bringing the Austro-Asiatic languages. According to Sergent, a link with the mature Harappan civilization is equally unlikely: neither in material culture nor in physical type is such a link indicated by the evidence. The Dravidians were certainly already in the Deccan when the mature Harappan civilization started. Sergent suggests that the Dravidians formed a pre-Harappan population in Sindh and Gujarat, and that they were overwhelmed and assimilated, not by the invading Āryans, but by the mature-Harappan population.[92]

The picture which emerges is that of a multi-lingual Indus-Saraswatī civilization with Dravidian as the minor partner (possibly preserved or at least leaving its mark in the southern metropolis of Mohenjo Daro) who ended up getting assimilated by the major partner, a non-Dravidian population whom we may venture to identify as Indo-Iranian and ultimately Indo-Āryan.

5.4.3 Afro-Dravidian kinship

One of the most remarkable findings related in some detail by Bernard Sergent, on the basis of three independent studies (by Lilias Homburger, by Tidiane Ndiaye, and by U. P. Upadhyaya and Mrs. S. P. Upadhyaya) reaching similar conclusions, is the multifarious kinship of the Dravidian language family with African languages of the Sahel belt, from Somalia to Senegal (Peul, Wolof, Mandè, Dyola). As Sergent notes, all Melano-African languages have been credibly argued to be related, with the exception of the Khoi-San and Korama languages of southern Africa and the Afro-Asiatic family of northern Africa; so the kinship of Dravidian would be with that entire Melano-African superfamily, though it would be more conspicuous with some of its members.

Thus, between Dravidian and Bantu, we find the same verbal endings for the infinitive, the subjunctive, the perfect, the active participle or nomen agentis, related postpositions or nominal case endings, and many others. In over-all structure, Dravidian and the Melano-African languages (as distinct from North-African and Khoi-San languages) form a pair when compared with other language families: "The tendency to agglutination, the absence of grammatical gender, the absence of internal vowel change, the use of pre-or postpositions instead of flection are some of the main traits which set the Negro-African and Dravidian languages jointly apart from the Indo-European and Hamito-Semitic groups."[93] Here I would say that this doesn't prove much: the first trait is shared with some more, and the other ones are shared with most language families on earth; it is IE and Semito-Hamitic which stand out jointly by not having these traits.[94]

[92] *ibid.* p. 52.

[93] *ibid.* p. 55, quoting from U. P. and S. P. Upadhyaya: "Dravidian and Negro-African", *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics*, 1976/5.1, p. 32-64; my quotation is retranslated from the French translation (as quoted by Sergent), "Affinités ethno-linguistiques entre les Dravidiens et les Nègro-Africains", *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire* 38.1, p. 127-157.

[94] That Hamito-Semitic (Afro-Asiatic) and IE stand jointly apart and may have a common origin in

But there are more specific similarities: "A simple system of five basic vowels with an opposition short/long, vocalic harmony, absence of consonant clusters in initial position, abundance of geminated consonants, distinction between inclusive and exclusive pronoun in the first person plural, absence of the comparative degree in adjectives, absence of adjectives and adverbs acting as distinct morphological categories, alternation of consonants or augmentation of nouns noted among the nouns of different classes, distinction between accomplished and unaccomplished action in the verbal paradigms as opposed to the distinction of time-specific tenses, separate sets of paradigms for the affirmative and negative forms of verbs, the use of reduplicated forms for the emphatic mode, etc." [95]

Sergent himself adds more isoglosses: "Preference for open syllables (i.e. those ending in vowels), the rejection of clusters of non-identical consonants, the generally initial position of the word accent in Dravidian and in the languages of Senegal". [96] The similarity in the demonstrative affixes is among the most striking: proximity is indicated by [i], initial in Dravidian but terminal in Wolof; distance by [a], intermediate distance by [u].

Knowing little of Dravidian and nothing at all of African languages, I don't feel qualified to discuss this evidence. However, I do note that we have several separate studies by unrelated researchers, using different samples of languages in their observations, and that each of them lists large numbers of similarities, not just in vocabulary, but also in linguistic structure, even in its most intimate features. Thus, "the preposed demonstratives of Dravidian allow us to comprehend the genesis of the nominal classes, the fundamental trait of the Negro-African languages". [97]

To quite an extent, this evidence suggests that Dravidian and some of the African languages (the case has been made in most detail for the Senegalo-Guinean languages such as Wolof) have a common origin. At the distance involved, it is unlikely that the isoglosses noted are the effects of borrowing. Either way, Proto-Dravidian must have been geographically close to the ancestor-language of the Negro-African languages. Did it come from Africa, as Sergent concludes? Should we think of a lost Saharan culture which disappeared before the conquests of the desert? Note that earlier outspoken fans of Dravidian culture didn't mind describing the Dravidians as immigrants: unlike the Āryans, they were bringers rather than destroyers of civilization, but they were immigrants

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Mesopotamia, has been argued by B. Sergent: *Les Indo-Européens*, p. 431-434. Critics (such as the reviewer in *Antaios* 10, Brussels 1996) have suggested that with this position, he is playing a political game. This much is true, that by design or by accident, he is pulling the leg of far-rightist adepts of IE studies who consider the reduction of IE to sisterhood with Semitic as sacrilege. All the same, Sergent's position is quite sound linguistically.

[95] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 55, quoting from U. P. and S. P. Upadhyaya: "Dravidian and Negro-African", *International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics*, 1976/5.1, p. 32-64, retranslated from the French translation, "Affinités ethno-linguistiques entre les Dravidiens et les Négro-Africains", *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire* 38.1, p. 127-157.

[96] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 56.

[97] *ibid.* p. 53.

nonetheless.[98] Or should we follow Tamil chauvinists in assuming that the Dravidians came from Tamil Nadu and the now-submerged lands to its South, and took their language and civilization to Africa?

5.4.4 Additional indications for Afro-Dravidian

Bernard Sergent argues against the Indian origin of Dravidian. One element to consider is that the members of the Dravidian family have not diverged very much from one another. The relative closeness of its members suggests that they started growing apart only fairly recently: a thousand years for Tamil and Malayalam (well-attested), perhaps three thousand for the divergence of North- from South-Dravidian. This would indicate that Dravidian was still a single language covering a small area in the early Harappan period, after having entered the country from the West.

That the "genealogical tree" of the Dravidian family seems to have its trunk in the coastal West of India, i.e. to the northwest of the main Dravidian area, has long been recognized by scholars of Dravidian.[99] It also fits in with the old Brahminical nomenclature, which includes Gujarat and Maharashtra in the *Pañcha-Draviḍa*, the "five *Draviḍa* areas of Brahminical settlement" (as contrasted with *Pañcha-Gauḍa*, the five North-Indian ones). The northwestern coast was the first part of India to be dravidianized, the wellspring of Dravidian migration to the south, but also an area where Dravidian was gradually displaced by Indo-Āryan though not without influencing it.

Another indication for the Dravidian presence in Gujarat is the attestation in Gujarati Jain texts of inter-cousin marriage, typically South-Indian and quite non-Indo-European.[100] The IE norm was very strict in prohibiting even distant forms of incest, a norm adopted by both Hinduism and Christianity.[101] Linguists had already pointed out, and Sergent confirms, that Dravidian has left its mark on the Sindhi, Gujarāti and Marāṭhi languages (as with the distinction between inclusive and exclusive first person plural) and toponymy. So, it is fairly well-established that Dravidian culture had a presence in Gujarat while spreading to South India.

It is possible that Gujarat was a waystation in a longer Dravidian migration from further west. Whether the itinerary of Dravidian can ultimately be traced to Sudan or thereabouts, remains to be confirmed, but Sergent already has some interesting data to

[98] E.g. Father H. Heras: *Studies in Proto-Indo-Meditarranean Culture* (1953), and Alain Daniélou: *Histoire de l'Inde* (1983).

[99] A map showing this "tree" is given in G. John Samuel, ed.: *Encyclopedia of Tamil Literature*, Institute of Asian Studies, Madras 1990, p-45, with reference to Kamil Zvelebil, who locates the Proto-Dravidians in Iran as late as 3500 BC.

[100] Bernard Sergent: Genèse de l'Inde, p. 51.

[101] This in contrast with Biblical Judaism and especially with Islam: Hindu converts to Islam were often required to prove their conversion by eating beef and, if possible, marrying a cousin or niece; half of the marriages in rural Pakistan are between cousins. Note, however, that the Zoroastrians deviated from the IE standard by also practising marriage within the family.

offer in support. Africans and Dravidians had common types of round hut, common music instruments, common forms of snake worship and tree worship. Thus, a South-Indian board game *pallankuli* closely resembles the African game *mancalal*; varieties of the game are attested in Pharaonic Egypt and in a pre-Christian monastery in Sri Lanka.[102]

A point which I do not find entirely convincing is the distinction, based on Mircea Eliade's research, between two types of Shamanism, one best known from Siberia and in evidence among all people originating in North and East Asia including the Native Americans and the Indian Munda-speaking tribes, another best known from Africa but also attested among some South-Indian tribes.[103] This is a distinction between Shamanism properly speaking, in which the Shaman makes spirit journeys, despatches one of his multiple souls to the spirit world to help the soul of a sick person, etc.; and the religion of ghost-possession, in which the sorcerer allows the ghost to take him over but at the same time makes him obey. The latter is perhaps best known to outsiders through the Afro-Caribbean Voodoo religion, but is also in evidence among South-Indian tribals such as the Saora and the Pramalai Kallar.

If anthropologists have observed these two distinct types, I will not disbelieve them. It does not follow that there must be a link between Africa and South India: Sergent himself notes that the same religion of ghost-possession is attested among the Australian aboriginals, who are related with the Veddoid substratum in India's population.[104] On the other hand, this theme of ghost-possession is but one of Sergent's numerous linguistic and anthropological data which all point in the same direction of Afro-Dravidian kinship.

5.4.5 Uralic-Dravidian kinship

If Dravidian migrated from Africa to India through the Middle East, it could have left traces in Egypt and countries under Egyptian influence as well, explaining the data which led earlier researchers to the thesis of a Dravidian "Indo-Mediterranean" culture.[105] Sergent links Indian forms of phallus worship with Sahel-African, Ethiopian, Egyptian and Mediterranean varieties of the same. The Egyptian *uraeus* ("cobra"), the snake symbol on the pharaonic regalia, has been linked in detail with Dravidian forms of snake worship, including a priest's possession by the snake's spirit. Dravidian cremation rituals for dead snakes recall the ceremonial burial of snakes in parts of Africa.[106] Others have added the

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[102] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 59.

[103] *ibid.* p. 62.

[104] *ibid.* p. 62.

[105] E.g. Father H. Heras: *Studies in Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture*, Indian Historical Research Institute, Bombay 1953.

[106] For all Sergent's details about Dravidian snake-worship, which fits in well with the classical picture of snake-worship as an "aboriginal" or at least non-Āryan element in Hinduism, it is interesting to note that he (*Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 482, n.607) deviates from the mainstream in his etymology of *nāga*, "snake". With reference to Manfred Mayrhofer, he links it quite regularly to Germanic *s-nake*; the prosthetic *s-* is quasi-onomatopoeic. Personally, I suggest an even more regular link with Germanic "naked" (from PIE

similarity between the Dravidian *nāga-kal* (Tamil: "snake-stone", a rectangular stone featuring two snakes facing one another, their bodies intertwined) and the intertwined snakes in the *caduceus*, the Greek symbol of science and medicine.

It has consequently been suggested that some Dravidian words may also have penetrated into the European languages. Thus, Dravidian *kal*, "stone", resembles Latin calculus, "pebble", and Dravidian *malai*, "mountain", resembles an Albanian and Rumanian word *mal*, "rock, rocky riverside".[107] But this hypothesis is a long shot and we need not pursue it here.

Far more substantial is the Dravidian impact on another language family far removed from the recent Dravidian speech area, viz. Uralic. The influence pertains to a very sizable vocabulary, including core terms for hand, fire, house (Finnish kota, Tamil kudi), talk, cold, bathe, die, water, pure, see, knock, be mistaken, exit, fear, bright, behind, turn, sick, dirty, ant, strong, little, seed, cut, wait, tongue, laugh, moist, break, chest, tree; some pronouns, several numerals and dozens of terms for body parts.[108] But it goes deeper than that. Thus, both language families exclude voiced and aspirated consonants and all consonant clusters at the beginning of words. They have in common several suffixes, expressions and the phonological principle of vocalic harmony.

As the Dravidian influence, like that of IE, is more pronounced in the Finno-Ugric than in the Samoyedic branch, we may surmise that the contact took place after the separation of the Samoyedic branch. But the main question here is how Dravidian could have influenced Uralic given their actual distance. Sergent suggests that a lost branch of Dravidians on the way from Africa strayed into Central Asia and got assimilated but not without influencing their new language.

He also rejects the theory that Dravidian forms one family along with Uralic, Turkic, Mongolian and Tunguz. The latter three are often grouped as "Altaic", a partly genetic and partly areal group which may also include Korean and Japanese, and all the said languages have at one time or another been claimed as relatives of Dravidian, with which they do present some isoglosses. However, the isoglosses are fragmentary and mostly different ones for every language group concerned. Moreover, some Dravidian influences are also discernible in Tokharic, or Arshi-Kuchi (Tokharic A c.q. Tokharic B) as Sergent appropriately calls it, which is obviously a matter of influence through contact. So Sergent concludes that this is a matter or areal influence rather than genetic kinship: Dravidian was a foreign language entering Central Asia at some point in time to briefly exert an influence on the local languages before disappearing.[109]

**nogwos*/*nogwodhos*), which reveals the basic meaning: the snake is unhairy, sheds its skin, and exposes itself more deeply to its environment by not having limbs with which to keep objects or the ground at a distance, all forms of exposure or nakedness. *Nāgā Sādhu*s are those Hindu godmen who walk naked.

[107] Mentioned in a long enumeration of pre-IE loans, but without reference to the Dravidian counterparts, in Sorin Paliga: "Proto-Indo-European, Pre-Indo-European, Old European Archaeological Evidence and Linguistic Investigation", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, Fall 1989, p. 309-334.

[108] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 66-67.

[109] *ibid.* p. 71-76.

I am not sure this will convince everyone: if Dravidian is not genetically linked with all the said language groups, it might still be so with one of them, viz. Uralic, at least on the strength of the data Sergent offers. Tamil chauvinists may well be tempted to complete the picture by claiming that before the Indo-Europeans from India colonized Central Asia and Europe, it was the turn of the Dravidians to colonize Central Asia and, after mixing genetically and linguistically with the natives, to develop the Uralic languages. At a time when subtropical Neolithic cultures had a tremendous technological and demographical edge over the hunter-gatherers in the inhospitable northern countries, it would not even be so far-fetched to imagine that a small wayward group of Dravidians could enter the vast expanse of Central Asia and completely change the linguistic landscape there.

At any rate, Sergent's observations represent a clean break with earlier theories which had the Dravidians originate in the Uralic speech area and preceding the Indo-Āryans in an invasion of India from Central Asia.

5.4.6 Geographical distribution of IE languages

Since Bernard Sergent doesn't take the Indocentric case for IE seriously, he doesn't bring out all the linguistic data which to him support the Kurgan scenario. One classical argument from linguistics is nonetheless developed at some length: "In Europe one finds the most numerous and geographically most concentrated IE language groups. Such a situation is not unique, and invariably denotes the direction of history: the Indo-Iranian languages represent a branch extended to the east and south, starting from Europe and not the other way around. It is obviously not the IE languages of Europe which have come from India".[110]

Thus early in his book (p. 30 of 584 pp.), he is already so sure that "obviously" the central question of the Urheimat has been decided to the disadvantage of India. That is a great pity, for it is the reason why he has not applied himself to really developing the argument against the Indian Urheimat. If anyone is capable of proving the AIT, it must be Sergent. Yet, because he assumes no proof is necessary, he gives the question much less attention than e.g. the much less contentious (though more original) question 'of the geographical origins of Dravidian.

To be sure, the pattern of language distribution invoked by Sergent as "not unique", is indeed well-attested, e.g. in sub-Saharan West Africa, there are about 15 language families, while in the much larger region of sub-equatorial Africa, a very large majority of the people speaks languages belonging to only one family, Bantu. Though it is only a branch of a subfamily of the Niger-Kordofanian language family, Bantu easily outnumbers all the other branches of this family combined: "Africanists conclude that Bantu originated in a small area, on the border between Nigeria and Cameroon."[111]

[110] *ibid.* p. 29-30.
[111] *ibid.* p. 30.

But in fact, India is in this respect more akin to West Africa, and Europe more to subequatorial Africa. India has more language families: Nahali, Andamanese, Burushaski, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic (Munda and Mon-Khmer), Sino-Tibetan (Himālayan, Tibetic and Burmese) and IE (Iranian, Kafir, Dardic, Indo-Āryan, and possibly proto-Bangani). Europe is almost entirely IE-speaking, with Basque serving as the European counterpart to the Khoi-San languages in subequatorial Africa, a left-over of the original linguistic landscape largely replaced with the conquering newcomer, IE c.q. Bantu; and Uralic (Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian) a fellow if perhaps slightly later intruder in the European landscape, vaguely comparable to the intrusion of an Austronesian language in a part (viz. Madagascar) of southern Africa.

Therefore, I reject the argument from the geographical distribution. I have already pointed out another objection against it: if the spread of the IE languages to Europe was often a matter of assimilating divergent native populations, this process promoted the speedy diverging of the IE dialects into distinct language groups. Though this is not a conclusive argument against the possibility of IE settlement in India being younger than in Europe, it at least terminates the impression that there was a compelling case in favour of that possibility. So, even under Bernard Sergent's hands, the fabled "linguistic evidence" has failed to decide the IE Urheimat question once and for all.

5.5 THE EVIDENCE FROM COMPARATIVE RELIGION

5.5.1 Āryan contributions to indigenous culture

Unlike most invasionists, who minimize the IE contribution by seeing "pre-Āryan" origins behind every (post-Harappan) Hindu cultural item, Sergent admits the IE origin of numerous elements of Hinduism usually classified as remnants of earlier populations. Though I will offer only very little comment on it, this is one of the most elaborate and original sections in his book.

In invasionist sources, and more so in politicized writings against the "Āryan invader religion" Hinduism, it is claimed that the two most popular gods, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*, are (the former partly, the latter wholly) sanskritized pre-Āryan indigenous gods. Sergent argues that they are in fact neat counterparts of IE gods attested in distant parts of the IE language domain, *Viṣṇu* corresponding to the Germanic god *Vidar*, *Śiva* to the Greek and Thracian and Phrygian god *Dionysos* and to an extent also to the Celtic god *Dagda*.[112] He notices the puzzling fact that the classical *Śiva* is unattested in the *Veda*s (though *Śiva*'s persona includes some elements from *Indra*, *Rudra* and *Agni* who are not counterparts of *Dionysos*); so he suggests that the *Śiva* tradition, definitely part of the common IE heritage, was passed on through a *Vrātya* or non-*Ved*ic Indo-Āryan circle.[113] This is an important

[112] *ibid.* p. 402.

[113] *ibid.* p. 323-324, with reference to Jarl Charpentier: "Ueber Rudra-Siva", *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 23 (1909), p. 151-179.

acknowledgment of the fact that the *Ved*ic tradition is only one tradition in the Indo-Āryan religious landscape, a key element in Shrikant Talageri's reconstruction of ancient Indian history: just as Sanskrit is not the mother of all Indo-Āryan languages, the *Veda*s are not the wellspring of the whole of Hindu tradition.[114]

Sergent goes into great detail in showing how the IE trifunctionality model does apply throughout the *Ved*ic and *Purāṇ*ic worldview, in fact far more splendidly than in any other IE culture.[115] Thus, the first function is juridical-religious and corresponds with *sattva*, the transparent and truthful quality in the Hindu *triguṇa* or three-qualities model; the second function is martial-political and corresponds with *rajas*, the passionate and energetic quality; the third function is production and consumption, corresponding with *tamas*, the quality of materiality and ignorance. This threesome also corresponds with the *trivarga* ("three categories") model, where *dharma* or religious duty is *sāttvika*, *artha* or striving for worldly success is *rājasika*, *kāma* or sensuous enjoyment is *tāmasika*, though there is a fourth (*nirguṇa*, "quality-less") dimension, viz. *mokṣa*, liberation. Likewise for the three states of consciousness: dreaming, waking, sleeping, surpassed by "fourth state", *turīya*, the yogic state. This scheme can then be applied to the Hindu pantheon, e.g. *Brahma* the creator is *rājasika*, *Viṣṇu* the maintainer is *sāttvika*, *Śiva* the dissolver is *tāmasika*, or the white mountain goddess *Pārvatī* is *sāttvika*, the tiger goddess *Durga*, *rājasika*, the black devouring goddess *Kāli*, *tāmasika*.

Many more IE elements in Hinduism could be cited to the same effect, such as the numerous correspondences in epic motifs between Hindu and European sagas, which Sergent discusses at length. But the interesting ones for our purpose are those which already existed in the Harappan civilization.

5.5.2 The *liṅga*

Dr. Sergent goes quite far in Indo-Europeanizing the alleged aboriginal contribution to Hinduism. He even asserts that "the *liṅga* (or *Śiva*'s phallus) cult is of IE origin".[116] An important detail is that Āryan *liṅga* worshippers venerated the *liṅga* by itself, not in the *liṅga-yoni* combination common in Hindu shrines, for "the *yoni* cult is without IE parallel".[117] Sergent makes a distinction between the sculpted stone phallus and the unsculpted variety. The first type is attested in the Harappan area and period, as well as in Africa and the Mediterranean, while the second type is common in historical and contemporary Hinduism.

On *liṅga* worship in the Harappan cities, we find conflicting presentations of the facts, with Sergent assuming that the same Mediterranean-type phallus worship flourished, while no less a scholar than Asko Parpola claims the exact opposite. Parpola contrasts the

[114] Shrikant Talageri: *The Aryan Invasion Theory, a Reappraisal*, Ch. 14.
[115] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 252-278.
[116] *ibid.* p. 139.
[117] *ibid.* p. 139.

"earliest historical (1^{st}-2^{nd} century BC) *liṅga*s", which are "realistic", with the "abstract form of the Harappan conical stones".[118] If Parpola is right, the Harappan *liṅga* cult was more akin to the classical Hindu form than to Mediterranean phallus worship. However, the crucial point of comparison in this case is not Harappa but the Indian tribals.

Votaries of the Indo-Mediterranean school claim that the cult of phallus-shaped stones is unknown among the indigenous (though in many cases historically dravidianized) tribal populations of India, implying that the Dravidian immigrants brought it from abroad, first to the Indus Valley, next to the whole of India. The same claim, that the untainted tribals are unattracted to the urban Hindu depravity of phallus-worship, has often been made by Christian missionaries as an argument in support of their doctrine that "tribals are not Hindus". But is this true?

First of all, many Indian tribals do practise *liṅga* worship. Pupul Jayakar (whose work is admittedly coloured by AIT assumptions) situates both Śiva and the *liṅga* within the culture of a number of tribes, e.g. the Gonds: "There are, in the archaic Gond legend of *Lingo Pen*, intimations of an age when *Mahādeva* or *Śiva*, the wild and wondrous god of the autochthons, had no human form but was a rounded stone, a *liṅgam*, washed by the waters of the river Narmada. Even to this day there are areas of the Narmada river basin where every stone in the waters is said to be a *Śiva liṅgam*: '(...) What was Mahadev doing? He was swimming like a rolling stone, he had no hands, no feet. He remained like the trunk (of a tree).' [Then, *Bhagwan* makes him come out of the water and grants him a human shape.]"[119] Till today, *Śiva* or a corresponding tribal god is often venerated in the shape of such natural-born, unsculpted, longish but otherwise shapeless stones.[120]

At the same time, female *yoni* symbols are common enough among Indian tribals, esp. inverted triangles, the origin of the Hindu plural-triangle symbols called *yantra*, venerated in such seats of orthodoxy as the Shankaracharya Math in Kanchipuram, where celibacy is the rule and thoughts of fertility unwelcome. In a palaeolithic site in the Siddhi district of Madhya Pradesh (10^{th} or 9^{th} millennium BC), a Mother Goddess shrine has been found containing well-known Hindu symbols: squares, circles, swastikas and most of all, triangles.[121] A participant in an excavation in Bastar told me of how a painted triangular stone was dug up, and the guide, a Gond tribal, at once started doing *pūjā* before this ancient idol.[122] Such is the continuity of indigenous Indian religion across eleven thousand

[118] Parpola: *Deciphering the Indus Script*, p. 221.

[119] Pupul Jayakar: *The Earth Mother*, Penguin 1989 (1980), p. 30. Remark that the Gonds are Dravidian-speaking tribals, which complicates the picture: are their customs to be treated as the heritage of native tribals who adopted the immigrant Dravidian language, or as Dravidian heritage?

[120] The shapeless stones associated with Śiva are comparable to the Black Stone in the Kaaba in Mecca, the central idol of the ancient Pagans of Arabia, which was dedicated to *Hubal*, a male moon-god resembling *Śiva*. For this reason, Indian authors have suggested some kind of kinship between the pre-Islamic cult in Mecca and the *Śiva* cult. This theory is critically discussed in Sita Ram Goel: *Hindu Temples, What Happened to Them*, vol. 2, 2nd enlarged edition (Voice of India, Delhi 1993, appendix 2.

[121] Pupul Jayakar: *The Earth Mother*, p. 20-22.

[122] Jan Van Alphen, of the Etnografisch Museum, Antwerp; personal communication, 1992.

years.

However, these two-dimensional triangles constitute a different symbolism from the three-dimensional ring-shaped or oval-shaped sculpted *yoni* symbols used in the *liṅga-yoni* combination. Sergent sees these sculpted *yoni* symbols as part of the Dravidian tradition with African links, while the triangles, like the unsculpted *liṅga* stones, might be older in India than even the Dravidian invasion as imagined by Sergent.

Quite separate from these abstract triangles and unsculpted stones, explicit sexual imagery is also common among the "untainted" tribals: "When the Bhils, primitive people of western India, paint their sacred *pithora*s, they include in an obscure corner a copulating man and woman. When asked to explain, they say, 'without this, where would the world be?'" [123] When they want to express the fertility process, they do so quite explicitly, and they don't have to make do with a shapeless stone. Conversely, when they do choose to use a shapeless stone, it must be for a different purpose. Therefore, it is logical that the tribal *liṅga* cannot be equated with the sexually explicit sculptures of the ancient Mediterranean cultures.

Like the tribals, *Ved*ic Hindus worship unsculpted *liṅga*s without explicit sexual connotation. Most Hindus will reject the Western interpretation of their idol as a phallic symbol, and the quoted details of tribal *liṅga* worship tend to prove their point, as would the abstract uses of the term *liṅga* ("sign", "proof", one of the terms in a syllogism). [124] The pebbles picked up from the Narmada river are hardly phallus-shaped, in contrast to the phallic pillars in the Mediterranean. When Hindus object to the purely sexual reading of their symbols by Western authors, the latter, irritated with the "refusal of prudish Indian hypocrites to face facts", retort that "after all, anyone can see that this is explicit sexual imagery." [125] Sometime in the 1980s, the two interpretations confronted when some people in the Philippines considered renaming their country as Maharlika, reportedly a local variation on *Mahāliṅga* used by traders at the time of the hinduization of Southeast Asia, on the plea that Sanskrit, unlike English and Spanish, was not "an imperialist language". Western-educated people objected that they could hardly be citizens of a country called "big penis", a problem of which the Maharlika proponents had not even thought. The renaming was cancelled.

Clearly, both conflicting interpretations have their validity, and *liṅga* worship in India is

[123] Pupul Jayakar: *The Earth Mother*, p. 36.

[124] For a serious discussion of the profound meanings of *liṅga* worship, see Swami Karpatri & Alain Danièlou: *Le mystère du culte du linga*, Ed. du Relié, Robion 1993.

[125] Or for a more academic variation: "The Brahmans succeeded in concealing the alcoholic and sexual-orgiastic character of the adoration of the phallus (*liṅgam* or *liṅga*) and transformed it into a pure ritualistic temple cult", according to Max Weber: *The Religion of India*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi 1992 (ca. 1910), p. 298. These Westerners' attitude is like that of the man in the joke, who visited a psychiatrist and was made to do the Rorschach test (i.e. revealing your psychic depths by saying what you "see" in shapeless ink blots). He described all kinds of sexual scenes, but when the psychiatrist diagnosed him as "sexually obsessed", he protested: "Sexually obsessed, me? But it's you who is showing me these dirty pictures!"

probably a syncretic phenomenon. If "phallus worship" was scorned in the *Ṛg-Veda* (in the much-discussed verses where the enemies are abused as *śiśna-devāh*, "those who have the phallus for god")[126], we do not perforce have to deny, as most anti-AIT authors do, that this concerned non-Āryan people who worshipped phallic stones. There were non-Āryans in many parts of India, though these phallus worshippers may equally have been Indo-Āryan-speaking cultists. We have at any rate a testimony for an ancient religious dispute. A clue has perhaps been given in Sergent's information that the lone *liṅga* ("objects which are *interpreted* as phalli")[127] has been found in the northern half of the Indus-Saraswatī civilization, the *yoni-liṅga* couple with ring-shaped *yoni* stones in its arguably Dravidian south.

Anyway, the point for now is that the alleged tribal and *Ved*ic Āryan forms of *liṅga* worship are very similar. If this *liṅga* worship was IE, as Sergent claims, and if it is an age-old Indian tribal tradition at the same time, may I suggest that the Indo-Europeans discovered or developed it in India itself. Could this be an instance of what should be the Holy Grail of non-invasionist scholars, viz. a case of decided continuity between native tribal and IE cultures, distinguishing both together from imported cultures such as that of the Dravidians?

5.5.3 Harappan and *Ved*ic fire cult

Most invasionist accounts of Hindu history acknowledge that classical Hinduism has included elements from the "Indus civilization". Thus, the unique water-supply system in the Indus-Saraswatī system and the public baths so visibly similar to the bathing *kuND* s still existing in numerous Indian cities have been interpreted as early witnesses to the Hindu "obsession" with purity. Though open to correction on details, this approach is not controversial. However, it runs into difficulties when items are discovered which are not typical for the Indian IE-speaking culture alone, but for the whole or larger parts of the IE-speaking family of cultures: how could these have been present in Harappa when the IE contribution was only brought in during or after Harappa's downfall by the Āryan invaders?

The bathing culture which the Harappans shared with the later Hindus is often cited as a pre-IE remnant which crept into Hinduism. However, this is also attested (with local differences, of course) among such IE tribes as the Romans and the Germanic people, and may therefore be part of the common IE heritage. Of course, a general concern about cleanliness is not a very specific and compelling type of evidence. More decisive would be a case like the famous Harappan seal depicting the so-called *Paśupati* (*Śiva* as Lord of Beasts), long considered proof that the *Śiva* cult is indigenous and non-Āryan. It is found to have a neat counterpart, to the detail, in the horned god *Cernunnos* surrounded by animals (largely similar ones and in the same order as on the *Paśupati* seal) on the Celtic

[126] *Ṛg-Veda* 7:21:5 and 10:99:3.
[127] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 139; emphasis added.

Gundestrup cauldron made in central Europe sometime in the last centuries BC. So, this Harappan motif may well be part of the common IE heritage.

For another very general trait, the absence of distinct temple buildings in the Harappan cities constitutes a defect in the AIT postulate of a *Ved*ic-Harappan cultural opposition. The fact that no temples are attested is a common trait of Harappa, of some ancient IE cultures (*Ved*ic, Celtic, Germanic), and of that other acclaimed centre of Āryanism, the South Russian Kurgan culture, where "no real sanctuaries have ever been found; they probably had open sanctuaries".[128] It contrasts with Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultures and with the *bhakti* cult in later Hinduism, which venerates the deity as if it were a human person and consequently gives the deity a house to live in: a temple. Harappans, *Ved* ic Āryans and contemporary Indian tribals have this in common: they worship without temple buildings.

For a more specific example: fire plays a central role in most historically attested IE religions, most emphatically in the indo-Iranian branches. A fire-cult was present in the Indus-Saraswatī civilization, and it resembled the practices of the *Ved*ic people who are supposed to have entered India only centuries later, and to have brought this particular tradition with them from their IE homeland. The presence of *Ved*ic fire-altars in several Harappan cities (Lothal, Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi) has been noticed by a number of authors, but is somehow always explained away or ignored. Parpola admits as "quite plausible" the suggestion (made to him by Raymond and Bridget Allchin) that they form an Indo-Āryan element within Harappan civilization, but he explains them as imported by "carriers of the Bronze Age culture of Greater Iran, who had become quickly absorbed into the Indus Civilization, culturally and linguistically".[129]

Likewise, Sergent admits that "the Indian *Ved*ic fire altar seemed to have borrowed its construction principles from the Indus civilization", all while "the very idea of the fire-cult was Indo-Iranian".[130] This falls neatly into place if we equate proto-Harappan with Indo-Iranian: the idea of a fire-cult was taken along by the emigrating Iranians, while the Indo-Āryans stayed on in the Indus-Saraswatī region to develop their altars' distinct Indian style of construction.

At any rate, how deeply had these Āryan fire-worshippers not penetrated the Harappan civilization, that they had installed their altars in patrician mansions of three of the largest Harappan cities, all three moreover very far from the northwestern border? Indeed, in the Harappan cities on the Indus itself, to my knowledge at least, no such fire-altars have yet been found; if they were imported from outside, it seems they came from the east, which would bring us back to Shrikant Talageri's thesis that IE originated in the Gaṅgā basin

[128] M. Gimbutas: "Proto-Indo-European Culture: The Kurgan Culture during the Fifth, Fourth and Third Millennia BC", in George Cardona et al., eds.: *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, p. 191.

[129] Asko Parpola: "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dasas", *Studia Orientalia*, Helsinki 1988, p. 238, quoted in K. D. Sethna: *The Problem of Aryan Origins*, p. 222-223.

[130] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 161.

and entered the Harappan area from there. Leaving aside this question of ultimate origins, the very fact of the *Ved*ic fire-altars in the Indus-Saraswatī culture is a serious problem for the AIT.

5.5.4 More on Harappan vs. *Ved*ic

As we have already seen, the stellar cult is common to the Harappan and *Ved*ic religions. This is explained by Asko Parpola as the effect of borrowing: the barbarian invaders adopting the religion of the empire they just conquered, somewhat like the Heathen Germanic tribes did when they conquered the Christian Roman empire. In fact, the whole of *Ved* ic and core-*Purāṇ*ic literature has been explained as essentially translations of non-Āryan Harappan traditions. A similar explanation is given for the "soma filter", often depicted on Harappan seals, and of which an ivory specimen has been discovered by J. M. Kenoyer's team.

Iravathan Mahadevan proposes that "the mysterious cult object that you find before the unicorn on the unicorn seals is a filter. (...) Since we know that the unicorn seals were the most popular ones, and every unicorn has this cult object before it, whatever it represents must be part of the central religious ritual of the Harappan religion. We know of one religion whose central religious cult [object] was a filter, that is the *soma* [cult] of the Indo-Āryans."[131] If this is not an argument for the identity of *Ved*ic and Harappan, I don't know what is. Yet, Mahadevan dismisses this conclusion citing the well-known arguments that the *Veda*s know of no cities while Harappa had no horses, so "the only other possibility is that a soma-like cult (...) must have existed in Harappa and that it was taken over by the Indo-Iranians and incoming Indo-Āryans."

Speaking of the unicorn: Prof. R. S. Sharma defends the AIT pointing out that the unicorn/*ekaśṛṅga* is popular on Indus seals and in late- or post-*Ved*ic literature but is not mentioned at all in the *Ṛg-Veda*.[132] Within the AIT, this would seem to be an anomaly: first the Harappans had unicorn symbolism, then the *Ved*ic-Āryan invaders didn't have it, and finally the later Āryans again had it. The implied and slightly contrived explanation is that native unicorn symbolism went underground after the Āryan invasion, but reasserted itself later. But this pro-AIT argument is circular in the sense that it is dependent on the AIT-based chronology, viz. of the *Ṛg-Veda* as post-Harappan. Its force is dissolved (along with the anomaly) if the possibility is considered that the *Ṛg-Veda* was pre-Harappan, with the unicorn an early Harappan innovation attested in both the archaeological and the late-*Ved*ic literary record.

Asko Parpola has developed the theory that there is at least one clearly identifiable Hindu deity whose trail of importation from abroad we can follow. In the Bactrian Bronze

[131] Iravathan Mahadevan interviewed by Omar Khan, Chennai, 17-11998, on http://www.harappa.com/script/mahadevantext.html

[132] "The Indus and the Saraswatī", interview with R. S. Sharma published on http://www2.cybercities.com/a/akhbar/godown/history/RSSIndus.htmIndus from 2-12-1998 onwards.

Age culture, deemed Indo-n if not specifically Indo-Āryan, ample testimony is available of the cult of a lion goddess, known in Hinduism as *Durgā*, "the fortress", and who is "worshipped in eastern India as *Tripura*, a name which connects her with the strongholds of the *Dāsas*".[133] Politicized Indian invasionists usually claim goddess worship as a redeeming native, non-Āryan, "matriarchal" and "humanist" contribution to the "patriarchal" and "oppressive" Hindu religion, but now it turns out to have been brought along by the Bactrian invaders: how one invasionist can upset another invasionist's applecart.

However, Parpola himself reports elsewhere that the same lion or tiger goddess was worshipped in the Indus-Saraswatī civilization as well. Discussing "carriers of the Bronze Age culture of Greater Iran" as having been "quickly absorbed into the Indus civilization", he finds support in "the famous Kalibangan seal showing a *Durgā*-like goddess of war, who is associated with the tiger".[134] Whether this shows an early Bactrian penetration of India as far as the Saraswatī riverside remains to be seen; other scenarios are possible. For now we retain Parpola's confirmation of a common religious motif in a Harappan city and an Āryan culture.

Just like those few colleagues who have paid attention to the elements of continuity between Harappa and Āryan India, Sergent fails to discuss the most plausible conclusion that could be drawn from all this material: that Harappan and post-Harappan or Āryan are phases of a single civilization.

5.5.5 The impact of East-Asian mythology

Indo-European mythology, or some of its branches, has certain motifs and stories in common with mythologies of non-IE cultures. Some of these are a common heritage dating back to long before a separate IE linguistic and cultural identity existed.

Conversely, some myths can be shown to have been transmitted in a fairly recent time, e.g. the Excalibur myth known to most readers through the King Arthur saga has an exact parallel in a North-Iranian myth, with the sword being drawn from the stone (a poetic reference to the mystery of metallurgy, transforming shapeless ore into metal implements), making its bearer invincible, and finally getting thrown into a lake. This is not because of a common IE heritage of the Celtic and Iranian communities, but because in the 2nd century AD, Sarmatian mercenaries in the Roman army were garrisoned in Britain and, well, told their story.[135] Through Mongolia and Korea, elements of this myth have even reached Japan when the supremacy of the sword was established there. So, myths are

[133] Asko Parpola: "The problem of the Aryans and the Soma: textual-linguistic and archaeological evidence", in G. Erdosy: *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*, p. 370.

[134] Asko Parpola: "The coming of the Aryans to Iran and India and the cultural and ethnic identity of the Dasas", *Studia Orientalia*, Helsinki 1988, p. 238, quoted in K. D. Sethna: *The Problem of Aryan Origins*, p. 222-223.

[135] Shan M. M. Winn: *Heaven, Heroes and Happiness. The Indo-European Roots of Western Ideology*, p. 34-35.

not necessarily witnesses from the night of time. Their invention and transmission can sometimes be dated.

In the case of the transmission of East-Asian myths into Hindu tradition, by medium of the Munda-speaking culture of the eastern Gaṅgā basin, the apparent date might pose a problem. Some contributions are fairly late: "The *pūjā*, that extremely common and important practice of covering the gods' idols with flowers and perfumes, is rather late in India, and succeeds wholly different practices: could that also be an East-Asian substratum?" [136] On the other hand, Sergent mentions several apparently East-Asian contributions to *Ved* ic and *Purāṇ*ic lore which point to the ultimate beginning of those traditions themselves.

The name of *Ikṣvāku*, founder of the Solar Dynasty of Ayodhyā, whom the *Purāṇ* ic genealogies place several dozen generations before the *Ṛg-Ved*ic seers, literally means "bitter gourd". Likewise, *Sumati*, wife of the Ayodhyā king *Sagara*, produces offspring with the aid of a bitter gourd. Sergent, following Jean Przyluski, attributes this to the Southeast-Asian mythic motif of the birth of humanity from a bitter gourd:. "The Austro-Asiatic myth has visibly been transposed in the legends of *Sumati* and *Ikṣvāku*". [137]

The birth of *Vyāsa*'s mother *Satyavati* from a fish equally refers to a Southeast-Asian myth, unknown in the IE world. The *Brāhmāṇa* have a story of *Brahma* or *Prajāpati*, the Creator, taking the form of a boar and diving to the bottom of the ocean to extract the earth and bring it to the surface. [138] This myth of the "cosmogonic plunge" is widespread in Siberia, among the native Americans, and among some Southeast-Asian peoples, but is foreign to the IE mythologies and to the *Ved*ic *Saṃhitā*. The same is true of another innovative mythic motif appearing in the *Brāhmāṇa*s: *Brahmāṇḍa*, the cosmic egg which, when broken, releases all creatures.

Sergent explains that the *Ṛg-Veda* could not yet know these myths, just as it had not yet adopted items of Munda vocabulary, because its horizon was still confined to the northwest. But once the *Ved*ic Āryans settled in the Gaṅgā basin, they started assimilating the mythic lore of the Munda people, also immigrants, but who had settled there earlier. So, this seems to confirm the classic picture of the Āryans moving through North India from east to west.

To be sure, even the non-invasionist school accepts that the *Ved*ic tradition spread eastwards during and after the Harappan period, just as it spread to South India in subsequent centuries; but it maintains that the Gaṅgā down to Kāśi or so, already had an Indo-Āryan (but non-*Ved*ic) population. This population was obviously exposed to influ-

[136] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 483, n.639, with reference to Louis de la Vallée Poussin: "Totémisme et végétalisme", *Extrait des Bulletins de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, 1929, 3me série, XV, p. 4-9, who emphasizes the similarity with devotional practices among the Kol tribe and among the Semang, a tribe in Malaysia. The more common explanation is that *pūjā* came from the south.

[137] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 386, quoting Jean Przyluski: "Un ancien peuple du Pendjab: les Udumbara", *Journal Asiatique* 208, 1926, p-30.

[138] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p-372, citing *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* 7:1:5:1-2 and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14:1:2:11.

ences from its eastern neighbours, immigrants from Southeast Asia. And their non-*Ved* ic, partly borrowed traditions were incorporated in later *Ved*ic and especially in *Purāṇ*ic literature. By contrast, the IE-speaking people living to the west of the *Ved*ic Puru tribe, those who migrated to the west and formed the other branches of IE, were not exposed to this Austro-Asiatic lore, which is why their mythologies have not adopted elements from Southeast-Asian myths, just as their languages have not borrowed from Munda (or if they have, those words or those mythic motifs would be pan-IE and not recognizable as borrowed).

If *Ikṣvāku*, one of flood survivor *Manu Vaivasvata*'s immediate successors, was indeed a historical figure, and if his name really refers to an Austro-Asiatic myth, then that would prove either that *Manu* and his crew had come from the southeast (but then why hasn't the bitter gourd myth become an-IE myth?), or that the Mundas were already in the Gaṅgā basin at the beginning of IE history as narrated in the *Purāṇ*ic genealogies (6776 BC?).[139] In that case, shouldn't non-invasionists be able to find more points of contact between IE and Munda, linguistically too? How exactly should we imagine the beginning of IE history in India, in what cultural and linguistic environment?

For example, one could imagine that the Āryans overran the Indus basin, then Afghanistan and beyond, because they had been pushed to the west by invading Mundas from the cast: if the idea of the fierce Āryans being put to flight by the fun-loving Mundas seems strange, remember that the invasion of the Roman Empire by the fierce Germanic tribes was partly caused by their being pushed westward by the Slavs. For another question: does this evidence of Munda contributions support the mainstream indological position that the entire *Purāṇ*ic history of the *Ved*ic and pre-*Ved*ic age in Ayodhyā, Kāśi or Prayāg is but "reverse euhemerism", i.e. the transformation of myth into tabulated history, so that *Ikṣvāku* and his clan never existed except as projections by aryanized Mundas of their gourd-god onto the ancestry of their conquerors? This is worth a discussion in its own right, but an important point certainly is that *Ikṣvāku* is mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda* (10:60:4), possibly referring to the dynasty rather than its founder.

[139] A parallel argument could be made from the commonly assumed etymology of Gaṅgā, a name already appearing in the oldest part of the *Ṛg-Veda* (6:45:31), viz. as an Austro-Asiatic loan cognate to Chinese *kiang/jiang*, "river". This would mean that the Munda presence in the (western!) Gaṅgā basin well precedes the beginning of the *Ved*ic period, and that they were either the first or the dominant group, so that they could impose their nomenclature. However, Zhang Hongming: "Chinese etyma for river", *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, January 1998, p. 1-43, has refuted the derivation of Chinese *kiang* from Austro-Asiatic, arguing among other things that the reconstructed Austro-Asiatic form is *krong, still preserved in the Mon-Khmer languages (even the river name Mekong appears unrelated; I once heard Prof. Satyavrat Shastri explain it as a Cambodian sanskritism from *Mā Gangā*). This makes the Munda origin of Gaṅgā less likely. A third language family may be involved, or an obscure IE etymon. How about Middle Dutch *konk-el*, "twist, turn, whirlpool"?

5.5.6 Some caveats to comparatists

Mythology is a large subject, and numerous myths are not well-known even to aficionados of the subject. This way, it sometimes happens that a Hindu myth gets classified as non-IE because it is not reported in any other IE mythology, only to show up in some far corner of the IE world upon closer scrutiny. Sergent provides one example. Everyone knows the Hindu myth of the "churning of the ocean" with which the gods and demons jointly produce the *amṛta* the immortality drink. Sergent assures us that this myth "has no parallel in the IE world"[140], that it "is ignored by *Ved*ic India and the IE world outside India"[141] but present in Mongolian mythology and in the *Kojiki*, a kind of Japanese *Purana*. Yet, he also informs us of a lesser-known Germanic myth in which the god *Aegir* chums the ocean to make the beer of the gods.[142] But that one finding, even if it is in only one (but certainly distant) corner of the IE world, completely nullifies the earlier statement that the myth "has no parallel in the IE world". It is in fact possible that the Mongolian version (which is closer to the Germanic one, with a single deity doing the churning) and the Japanese version have been adapted from an IE original, just like the Excalibur myth.

Secondly, eastern contributions to Hindu tradition are not exclusively from the Mundas. The *Rājasūya* ceremony described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* has an exact counterpart, not in Rome or Greece, nor in Chotanagpur or Japan, but in Fiji. The latter coronation ceremony has been analyzed into 19 distinct elements, and practically all of them are found in the *Rājasūya*.[143] This island culture is part of the vast expanse of the Austronesian language family. As we have seen, a number of scholars have pointed out remarkable lexical similarities between IE and Austronesian. Unlike in the case of the Mundas, contacts of the Indo-Europeans with the Austronesians are hard to locate even in theory, unless we assume that the Austronesians at one time had a presence in India (and even then, India is a big place).

Finally, if a myth or religious custom is attested in India but not in the other IE cultures, this need not mean that the Indians have borrowed it from "pre-Āryan natives" or so. It can also mean that the other Indo-Europeans have lost what was originally a pan-IE heirloom. All of them have started by going through the same bottleneck, passing through Afghanistan, immediately plunging themselves into a very different climate from India's permanent summer, so that they had to adopt a very different lifestyle. And as they moved on, the difference only got bigger. Of practically all IE myths attested in some IE cultures, we know that they have been lost in other (generally in most) IE cultures; it is statistically to bib expected that some myths have survived only in the Hindu tradition. And because of the full survival of Pagan religion in India plus the long centuries of literacy,

[140] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 116.

[141] *ibid.* p. 378-379

[142] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 378-79, with reference to Georges Dumézil: *Le Problème des Centaures*, Paris 1929, p. 51-60.

[143] *ibid.* p. 381, with reference to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 5:3-5, and Arthur M. Hocart: *Kingship*, OUP 1927, p. 76-83.

it is in fact to be expected that a much higher percentage than the statistical average has only survived in India. So, probably, some myths attested only in Hinduism are purely IE, and if they are also attested in a non-IE neighbouring culture, the possibility remains that the latter has borrowed it from the Indo-Europeans.

5.5.7 Harappa, teacher of China?

Quite separate from the importation of Southeast-Asian myths through the Austro-Asiatic population of the Gaṅgā basin, Sergent also notes similarities between Harappan and Chinese civilizations unrelated to Munda lore. An important myth is that of the cosmogonic tortoise, the Chinese symbol of the universe; also the vehicle of *Varuṇa*, god of world order, and the form which, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Prajāpati* takes to create the world. A tortoise-shaped construction forms part of the Yajur-*Ved*ic fire altar, and the tortoise has also been depicted in a giant sculpture found in Harappa, indicating a similar myth.[144] The tortoise as a cosmogonic symbol may well be one such mythic motif which is purely IE yet not attested in the non-Indian branches of IE. There is no indication for a foreign origin, and the tortoise's association with the Yamunā river (like the crocodile with the Gaṅgā, the swan with the Saraswatī) adds to its indigenous Northwest-Indian character.

Sergent also mentions the common origin of the Chinese and Hindu systems of 27 lunar mansions (*Xiu*, *Nakṣatra*), which we have already considered. He admits that it could only have originated in an advanced culture, and that this was not Mesopotamia. He also notes that the *Nakṣatra* system starts with the Pleiades/*Kṛttikā*, which occupied the vernal equinox position in the centuries around 2,400 BC, exactly during the florescence of the Indus cities.[145] So, Harappa is the best bet as originator of this system, which spread to China and later also to West Asia. Sergent wonders aloud whether the similarities should be attributed to Harappa being "the teacher of China, whose civilization's beginning is contemporaneous".[146]

He informs us that the *Nakṣatra* division of the heavens in unknown in other IE cultures, and in this case I would not speculate that they had known it but lost it along the way: the system was invented long after they had left India. This simple fact that there already was IE history before the genesis of the *Nakṣatra* system also explains another fact he mentions: "The *Ṛg-Veda* doesn't allude to it, except in its 10th mandala, the youngest one according

[144] *ibid.* p. 116 with reference to John Marshall: *Mohenjo Daro and the Indus Civilization*, London 1931.

[145] This date, approximately, has been accepted by Jean Filliozat: "Notes d'astronomie ancienne de l'Iran et de l'Inde", *Journal Asiatique* 250, 1962, p. 325-350; Albert Pike: "Lectures on the Ārya", Kentucky 1873; and A. L. Basham: *The Wonder That Was India*, London 1954, according to Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 422, n.65. We'll stick to this date for the present discussion, but not without mentioning that Asko Parpola (Decipherment of the Indus Script, p. 206, p. 263-265) himself gives reasons for thinking that Aldebaran had been the starting-point earlier, which would push back the birthdate of the *Nakṣatra* system to ca. 3054 BC, the time of the pre-Harappan Kot Diji culture.

[146] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 380

to most indologists."[147] And even the youngest book only mentions "constellations" (*Ṛg-Veda* 10:85:2), a concept known to all cultures, without specifying them as lunar mansions. At any rate, it is only at the end of (if not completely after) the *Ṛg-Ved*ic period, well after the European branches of IE had left India, that the *Nakṣatra* system was devised. This indicates once more that the *Ṛg-Veda* was pre-Harappan.

This chronology is confirmed once more by, another fact related by Sergent: "Another aspect of the continuity between Indus and historical India is marked in the personal names: the oldest in *Ved*ic India are in perfect conformity with Indo-European customs and highlight mostly the attributes with which an individual (or his family) adorns himself. In a later period astral names appear in India, which is foreign to the customs observed elsewhere among the Indo-Europeans".[148] Exactly: the *Ṛg-Ved*ic people lived before the heyday of astronomy in Harappa and before the starry sky acquired a central place in the late-*Ved*ic "and" in the Harappan religion.

5.5.8 The Harappan contribution

It is remarkable that Sergent has identified the Oriental origin of so many Hindu myths, that he has identified the Dravidian and even African origin of so many Hindu customs (including even the purity concept underlying post-*Ved*ic caste relations)[149] yet he has said relatively little about specifically Harappan contributions, even though these should logically have made a much larger impact. After all, the Harappans were more numerous, more advanced and more literate than the Mundas, and it is in their territory that the invading Āryans settled before scouting around in the then peripheral and relatively backward Munda-speaking region.

To be sure, Sergent devotes a chapter to the Harappan heritage in Hindu civilization. Thus, the weights and measures found in Lothal are the same ones which Kautilya has defined in his *Arthaśāstra*.[150] Personally, I would add that apart from being an important fact in itself, this continuity may also be symptomatic for a profounder continuity pertaining to fundamental cultural traits. Thus, the same search for standardization visible in the decimal measurements and in the orderly geometrical lay-out of the Harappan cities is evident in the rigorous structure of the *Ved*ic hymns; in the attempt in the later *Ved*ic literature to categorize all types of phenomena in neat little systems (from verbal conjugation classes listed by the grammarians through the *Manu Smṛti*'s artificial genealogy of the occupational castes in society to the *Kāma Sūtra*'s varieties of sexual intercourse)[151];

[147] *ibid.* p. 118.
[148] *ibid.* p. 121.
[149] *ibid.* p. 483, n.639: "As the same importance of purity is found in other societies, e.g. Semitic societies including even Islam and sub-Saharan Africa, it is not impossible that we have here another substratum: that of the ex-Dravidians of North India [Sindh-Gujarat], for instance?"
[150] *ibid.* p. 113.
[151] As Cyrus Spitama, central character in Gore Vidal's historical novel *Creation* puts it: east of the Indus, everything is counted. Witness the 64 skills, the 24 categories plus the 1 spectator of *Sāṃkhya*

and in the laborious ritual and architectonic details laid down in Brahminical texts for the proper construction of *Ved*ic altars.

Sergent correctly notes that statuettes of mother goddesses have been found in large numbers in the Harappan cities, that mother goddesses are equally common in popular Hinduism, and that these are very uncommon in the historic IE religions. He also adds that in Europe, mother goddesses originated in the neolithic Old European culture, and remained popular all through the IE Pagan period to be picked up for christianization as Our Lady, suggesting a parallel: in India like in Europe, the popular pre-IE mother goddess survived and even asserted itself against the male-dominated IE official religion.

But clearly, IE religion was not hostile to the goddess cult: when the Church sought to win over the devout by accepting their goddess worship in a christianized form, most of Europe had been IE-speaking for several thousand years. All memory of a pre-IE period had vanished, yet these Celts and Romans and Germans venerated goddesses. In their mythologies, goddesses played only a supporting act, but this is the same situation as in *Purāṇ*ic Hinduism, in which goddess worship is widespread even though most myths have the male gods in the starring roles. It is like in real life: men need to dramatize their importance with all kinds of heroism, women simply are important without making such fuss over it. The Virgin Mary is by far the most popular Catholic saint, still present on every rural street corner around my village, much more popular than Jesus and His Father, yet the parts about her in the New Testament and the stories confabulated about her are very few. Therefore, our view of IE religion may be distorted by the fact that we rely on textual sources and myths, which belong to the public and official part of the religion; while by contrast, of Harappan religion we only have cult objects, showing us religion as it was lived by the people.

Sergent mentions the association of gods with animals as their respective "vehicle" (*vāhana*: *Viṣṇu*'s eagle, *Śiva*'s bull, *Saraswatī*'s swan etc.) as an element of Hinduism which is commonly attributed to the pre-Āryan Harappans. But he minimizes this contribution, pointing out that such associated animals are common throughout the IE pantheon, e.g. *Athena* with her owl, *Wodan* with his raven, *Jupiter* who can appear as an eagle, *Poseidon* as a horse, *Demeter* as a cow.[152] In one case, the correspondence is even more exact: like Hindu goddess *Saraṇyū* (mother of the *Aśvin*s), Celtic goddess *Epona* is imagined as either mare or rider.

Several more astronomy-based amendments to IE customs are mentioned as effects of Harappan influence, e.g. the fixation of the goddess festival (which existed in other parts of the IE world as well - see that the Indo-Europeans had goddess cults of their own?) at the autumnal equinox. Very significant is the "stellar vestment": the shirt worn by the famous Harappan "priest-king" shows little three-petaled designs (also in evidence on other Harappan depictions), which Sergent, following Parpola, interprets as depictions of stars,

("numbering") cosmology, the 4 noble truths and the noble 8-fold path of the Buddha, the 8-limbed yoga of Patanjali, the 4 stages of life, Jawaharlal Nehru's "5 principles of peaceful coexistence" etc.

[152] Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 1 15.

exactly like in the scriptural description of the tārpya coat which the king must wear at some point in the *Rājasūya* ceremony. In post-Harappan centuries, Mesopotamian kings are known to have worn such stellar vestments, and the China court ritual was likewise full of celestial symbolism.[153]

What we see happening in the Harappan period is that a particular IE culture transforms itself under the impact of the florescence of what I would call a first scientific revolution; there is no indication of a foreign impact. Sergent has the facts under his own eyes without realizing their significance: "*Śiva*, *Varuṇa*, *Yama*, *Durgā-Pārvatī*, we already said it, are deities of IE origin, the rituals concerning fire, soma and the person of the king are equally of IE if not Indo-Iranian origin. But it is now obvious that the Indo-Āryans, upon arriving in India, have amply harvested the Harappan heritage and included its ritual customs (construction of hearth-altars, rites inside buildings, use of the stellar vestment, ritual baths, fixation of feasts on the stellar equinoxes) in their own religion."[154] Well, building facilities had been vastly improved, astronomical knowledge had been developed, so these innovations are not a matter of syncretism, merely of material and intellectual progress.

What more continuity was there? Apart from numerous material items, we note Harappan depictions of men wearing a tuft of hair on their backheads like Brahmins do, and of women wearing anklets. Some pictures suggest the notion of the "third eye". Most importantly, the Harappan people have remained in place: "the Italian anthropologist has emphasized not only that the skulls of Mohenjo Daro resemble those of today's Sindh and those of Harappa resemble those of today's Panjab, but even that the individual variability is identical today to what it was four thousand years ago."[155] Though Sergent considers it exaggerated to say that "the Indus civilization is still alive today", I would comment that it is not very exaggerated.[156]

But the point for now is that we really have seen very little evidence of the incorporation in *Ved*ic tradition of elements which are foreign to it and which are traceable to the Harappan civilization. Compared with the limited but very definite list of items borrowed by Hindu tradition from Eastern cultures, the harvest in the case of the Harappan contribution is of a different type, larger but murkier. In spite of the ample archaeological material (quite in contrast with the zero objects identified as *Ved*ic-age Austro-Asiatic), we don't get to see a sequence of "now it's in Harappa, and now it enters *Ved*ic tradition". We don't get to see that clear contrast between Harappan and *Ved*ic which most scholars have taken for granted. What we see is on the one hand plenty of elements which are simply in common between the *Ved*ic and Harappan cultures, and on the other certain late-*Ved*ic

[153] *ibid.* p. 121, with reference to Asko Parpola: *Deciphering the Indus Script*, p. 201-218.

[154] *ibid.* p. 124.

[155] *ibid.* p. 128, quoting Mario Cappieri: "Ist die Indus-Kultur und ihre Bevölkerung wirklich verschwunden?", *Anthropos* 60:22,1965, p. 22.

[156] *ibid.* p. 128. The quoted phrase, which Sergent dismisses in footnote (p. 425, n.146) as "a Hindu nationalist myth", is from Dharma Pal Agrawal: *L'Archéologie de l'Inde*, CNRS, Paris 1986, p. 2.

innovations which constitute a departure from the common IE heritage but which are perfectly explainable through internal developments, particularly in proto-scientific knowledge and material control of the environment.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Bernard Sergent has written a book of incomparable erudition to narrate the genesis of the "composite culture" of Hinduism from what to him are the separate sources of Harappan, Dravidian, Indo-European and Austro-Asiatic elements. As part of this effort, he has tried to pinpoint the arrival of the Indo-Āryans in India, and this attempt has become the heroic failure of his book. Even in his two fields of expertise, he has not succeeded in finding decisive evidence for the Āryan invasion: in archaeology, he has not shown where a Bactrian or otherwise foreign culture crossed the Indus into India (indeed, the one entry he identifies as the Indo-Āryan invasion doesn't get farther than Pirak in Baluchistan); and in physical anthropology, he has not been able to identify an immigration wave coinciding with the supposed aryanization of northwestern India.

In comparative religion and mythology, he has thrown a few interesting challenges to non-invasionists, giving them some homework to do in fact-finding as well as in interpreting the data. But here too, he has not presented any insurmountable difficulties for a non-invasionist reading of the Harappan and *Ved*ic information. On the contrary, many bits of information which he has either discovered or synthesized from secondary sources actually add substance to the emerging outlines of a non-invasionist version of ancient Indian and Indo-European history. For once the trite reviewer's phrase fully applies: one need not agree with Sergent's position, but his work is highly thought-provoking and bound to stimulate further research.

Chapter 6

Departing Thoughts

6.1 SOME FALSE PROBLEMS

6.1.1 Glottochronology

The idea that the direction of the migration from the IE language family from its Urheimat should be reversed, may still be hard to digest. Could several generations of scholars have been collectively wrong? One of the objections which I expect both laymen and academics to raise, is the magnitude of the chronological revision needed to account for a scenario which makes the *Ṛg-Veda* pre- instead of post-Harappan. The non-invasionist school shifts the date of the *Ṛg-Veda* back a full two thousand years. Could the scholars have been so wrong about such matters as the rate of change of languages, that the length of the history of Sanskrit has to be increased this much?

One of the methods used in estimating the age of the fragmentation of PIE into the IE language groups is, or rather was, *glottochronology*, an extrapolation of the observed rate of change in languages onto the preliterate past. When comparing dictionaries or literary corpora of successive centuries, one can count the number of words disappearing from or newly appearing in a language; and likewise the phonological and grammatical changes. Yet, it is very doubtful that the results obtained can reasonably be extrapolated, except the unavoidable finding that the rate of change is very uneven. Languages develop slower or faster depending on the cultural changes in the speech community, on the rate of contact with other languages, and on purely random factors. Thus, Greeks and Albanians both lived for several centuries under Turkish rule, and this had, little effect on the Greek language but made a tremendous impact on Albanian, which replaced a large part of its vocabulary with Turkish words. Therefore, 19th-century calculations of the age of IE on this basis are no longer relied upon: “glottochronology is a methodological deadlock”. [1]

[1] Harald Haarmann: “Basic vocabulary and language contacts: the disillusion of glottochronology”, *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 1990, p. 35.

Nonetheless, it is easy to show that languages evolve more slowly than the standard version of the AIT implies. Linear-B Greek is a thousand years older than classical Greek, yet it is unmistablably Greek, not some half-way stage between Greek and the other branches of IE. The Romance (and likewise the Slavic) languages have gone their separate ways nearly two thousand years ago, and yet they still have a whole lot in common. It takes many centuries to arrive at the degree of difference as exists between Indo-Iranian and the other branches of IE, and even centuries to arrive at the known difference between Iranian and Sanskrit.

In a discussion on the Āryan question, a friend of mine who is an AIT-believing philologist remarked off-hand that the Indo-Āryan languages showed more internal change (from Old through Middle to New Indo-Āryan) than the other IE language groups. This may be true, if only because Old Indo-Āryan was much more archaic and closer to reconstructed PIE than the oldest known Latin or Slavic or Armenian (another reason being that modern Hindi or Bengali are nieces rather than daughters of Sanskrit). it is especially remarkable when you consider that the Indo-Āryan languages have lived in a comparatively very stable linguistic environment, with little foreign impact; even Persian, the court language in the 13^{th} to 19^{th} century in North India, has only imparted some vocabulary but failed to influence Hindi grammar.

Let us assume, then, that this impression of a relatively high rate of change in Indo-Āryan is correct. The rate of change in Indo-Āryan would not be abnormally high if its history is made two thousand years longer, as the Indian critics of the AIT maintain. This would become perfectly normal if the time span from *Ved*ic Sanskrit to modern Hindi is found to be twice as long as that from Homeric Greek to modern Greek, i.e. if the *Veda*s are dated to before rather than after the golden age of the Harappan cities.

6.1.2 Zarathushtra's chronology

In this context, the objection will also be raised of the incompatibility of the non-invasionist chronology with the date of Zarathushtra, now commonly assigned to ca. 1200 BC. However, this date of Zarathushtra is itself based on the AIT, on the assumption that Zarathushtra was only slightly younger than the *Ved*ic seers. Move the date of the *Veda*, and Iranologists will move the date of Zarathushtra accordingly. Moreover, the time distance between the *Avesta* and the *Ṛg-Veda* is definitely longer than usually assumed. Zarathushtra writes in a language that is younger than *Ved*ic.

In the introduction to his authoritative translation of Zarathushtra's *Gatha*s, Prof. S. Insler writes: "The prophet's hymns are laden with ambiguities resulting both from *the merger of many grammatical endings* and from the intentionally compact and often elliptical style" [2] Compared with *Ved*ic, Zarathushtra's language was already eroded morphologically and phonologically. Admittedly, such glottochronological argument is in general

[2] S. Insler: *The Gāthā*s *of Zarathushtra*, in the series *Acta Iranica*, 3rd series vol.1, Brill, Leiden 1975, p. 1 (emphasis mine).

not strong (modern Lithuanian has preserved Indo-Europeanisms which Greek had lost 3000 years ago), but here we have two very closely related languages, both in the same solemn and conservative style of religious hymns. Moreover, Zarathushtra also expresses a stage of religious development that is quite post-*Ved*ic (e.g. his reaction against animal sacrifice, paralleled by the same development in post-*Ṛg-Ved*ic India), being in some respects a reaction against *Ved*ic notions and practices. I suggest Zarathushtra belonged to the Bactrian Bronze Age culture, while the Ṛg-Veda belonged to the pre-Harappan stage (incipient urbanization, no metal weapons yet) of the Indus-Saraswatī culture.

Does this agree with the Iranian traditions concerning the age of Zarathushtra? Yes and no. Iranian literature has highly divergent accounts of the age of Zarathushtra, ranging from 5,000 to 600 BC. One of the dates is bound to be close to the actual date which will have to be decided on the basis of external evidence, not least Zarathushtra's relation with *Ved*ic history.

6.1.3 The West-Asian term "Asura"

Another serious objection concerns the term *Asura*: in the *Ṛg-Veda* a word for "god" (cfr. Germanic *Ase*, *Aesir*), in later *Ved*ic literature a word for "demon", obviously parallel and causally related with the Iranian preference for *Asura/Ahura* as against the demonized *Deva/Daeva*, the remaining Hindu term for "god".[3] In the Indo-Āryan diaspora in West Asia of the 2nd millennium BC, we find quite a few personal names with *Asura*, e.g. the Mitannic general *Kart-ashura*, the name *Biry-ashura* attested in Nuzi and Ugarit, in Nuzi also the names *Kalm-ashura* and *Sim-ashura*, the Cilician king *Shun-ashura*, while in Alalakh (Syria), two people were called *Ashura* and *Ashur-atti.*[4] Bernard Sergent explicitly deduces a synchronism between early *Ved*ic and Mitannic-Kassite, which tallies splendidly with the AIT chronology.

At present, this can only be refuted at the level of hypothesis. it is perfectly possible, even if not yet attested archaeologically or literarily, that along with the Iranians, a purely Indo-Āryan-speaking group emigrated from India in the *Ṛg-Ved*ic period to seek its fortune in the Far West (it may be from them that Uralic speakers in Central Asia borrowed the term *Asura* along with *Sapta*, *Sasar*, etc.). It is these Indo-Āryan bands of warriors who engineered the conquests of their Mitannic and Kassite host populations. Considering that *Ved*ic names are still given to Hindu children today, thousands of years after *Ved*ic Sanskrit went out of daily use, and often in communities which speak a non-Indo-Āryan language,

[3]Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 211 and p. 280, makes the very popular mistake of seeing "the *Asura*s" as a separate class of gods next to "the *Deva*s". In fact, the distinction and opposition between them is a late-*Ved*ic development connected with the Irano-Indian (or Mazdeic-*Ved*ic) conflict. In the *Ṛg-Veda*, *Deva* and *Asura* are as synonymous as "God" and "Lord" are in Christian parlance.

[4]Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 210. In this context, though assyriologists might reject it as just too obvious, something can be said in favour of a link between *Asura* and the city name *Assur*, whence the ethnonym *Assyrian*. Some Indian authors are at any rate eager to read a Sanskritic origin in Sanskrit-sounding names like *Assur-bani-pal*.

it is quite conceivable that the Indo-Āryans in West Asia managed to preserve their *Ved*ic tradition from the time of their emigration until the mid-2nd millennium BC. And if so, they had to preserve it in the form it had at the time of their emigration, i.c. complete with the veneration for *Asura*, the Lord.

6.1.4 Greater India

Sometimes, Indian scholars unnecessarily overstate their claims, usually to the effect of magnifying the Hindu presence and role in the genesis of civilization in general or specified cultural achievements in particular. Thus, most of them used to be (and many still are) enthusiastic believers in the initial assumption of the fledgling Indo-European philology that Sanskrit was the mother of all other IE languages, rather than their sister. Western scholars can at best smile condescendingly when they read the fairly frequent claim that Hindus created the Mayan culture in Central America, not to speak of Paramesh Choudhury's claim that Chinese culture came from India. [5]

In the same spirit, the impression that the Kassites along with the Mitannians were to an extent Indo-Āryan, has been incorporated in an Indocentric account of IE expansion. Non-invasionists have made much of the presence of Sanskrit names in the Kassite dynasty in Babylon. Yet, the reality revealed by this evidence may be more complicated than is usually assumed. We have information from Semitic Mesopotamians about the Kassite language, and it was not Indo-Āryan. A number of known Kassite words are apparently unrelated to any known language, e.g. *mashu*, ("god"; *yanzi*, "king"; *saribu*, "foot". They also seem to have a formation of the plural unknown in IE, viz. with an infix, e.g. *sirpi, sirpami*, "brown one(s)", or *minzir, minzamur*, "dotted one(s)", [6] Assuming that the language described as "Kassite" and located by the Babylonian sources in the hills east of Mesopotamia is indeed the language of the Kassite dynasty (for language names sometimes change referent) [7], does this not refute the Indian connection of the Kassites?

No: to the relief of the much-maligned Hindu chauvinists, this state of affairs suggests a third scenario, viz. that a non-IE population in Iran used Sanskrit names referring to *Ved*ic gods. Let the Kassites have spoken a non-IE language. [8] This would be the same situation

[5] Thus, Bernard Sergent: *Genèse de l'Inde*, p. 477, scornfully mentions Paramesh Choudhury: *Indian Origin of the Chinese Nation*, and *The India We Have Lost: Did India Colonize and Civilize Sumeria, Egypt, Greece and Europe?* Strange theses indeed, but Choudhury's more recent book *The Āryan Hoax* shows a rare familiarity with contemporary scholarly thinking on the Āryan question, which Sergent fails to acknowledge.

[6] Wilfred van Soldt: "Het Kassitisch", *Phoenix* (Leiden) 1998, p. 90-93.

[7] E.g. the name "Frankish/French" originally refers to a Germanic language, roughly Old Dutch, yet now refers to the Romance language spoken in a state founded by the Frankish and Germanic-speaking king Clovis. Likewise, the name "Hittite" of an IE language is in fact the same word as "Hattic", name of the pre-IE Anatolian language displaced by Hittite.

[8] One of my history teachers in secondary school, Father Koenraad, used to speculate that the names Hatti and Kassi- are the same: fricative [h] or [x] corresponding to occlusive [k], as between Greek *kard-* and Germanic *heart*, and intervocalic [tt] softened to [ss], as in the Greek allophonic variation *thalatta/thalassa*

as in the Dravidian provinces: a non-IE-speaking population maintains its own language but adopts Sanskritic lore and nomenclature. This would mean that *Ved*ic culture had spread as much to the west as we know it has spread to the east and south, and that a part of western Iran (well before its Iranianization) was as much part of Greater India as Kerala or Bali became in later centuries.

6.1.5 Simple and avoidable mistakes

In the search for Āryan origins, scholars have sometimes been misled by ignorance of very down-to-earth facts. Let me give an example from my own experience. The approach known as linguistic paleontology has tried to connect the IE vocabulary with the flora and fauna of a particular region or climate zone, but mistakes have been made concerning the Indian fauna. It has been said that the otter (Sanskrit *udra*, Hindi *ūd-bilāv*) does not exist in India, while the word otter is part of the original PIE vocabulary, thus confirming that India cannot be the Urheimat. While I was pondering this problem, the answer came from my little daughter: "Daddy, when are we going to the zoo?" That's where I learned of the simple fact that otters do live in the rivers of the Himālayan foothills.

Likewise, the salmon has been used to decide the Urheimat question, with the claim that it only lives in the Caspian area (serving the interests of both the Kurgan and the Anatolian Urheimat schools).[9] The IE word **laksos* has retained its original meaning in German, Lithuanian, Russian, Ossetic. It has also developed the general meaning "fish" in Kuchi (Tokharic B); "reddish", "white-spotted red" (i.e. salmon-coloured) in some Iranian and Indo-Āryan languages; and in Indo-Āryan also "100,000".[10] The core meaning is undeniably the salmon, so if there is any validity in linguistic paleontology, there ought to be salmon in the Urheimat. Well, it so turns out that you do find salmon in some rivers of northwestern India.

It gets worse when we come to inside knowledge of Hindu civilization, or to the more technical aspects of this debate. Many advances made by scholars in one discipline, or in one country, are not known to scholars working elsewhere or in another discipline. I am sure that in this book, I must have overlooked pertinent information which is publicly available but somehow not within my horizon; and I see it happen to others as well. This is where doubt and anxiousness come in handy: if you're worried that you may be wrong, you get motivated to scan all the sources of information.

This is where the prevalent self-assuredness in both camps is so counterproductive. And of course, everyone should realize by now that we need an interdisciplinary approach:

("sea") or in the softening of intervocalic [t] from Greek *demokratia* to [s] in English *democracy*. This hypothesis, while unprovable, is as good as any other: it is by no means impossible that a tribe in the Kurdish mountains retained a language cognate to that of the original Anatolians, even when the latter lost theirs in favour of the incoming IE language now known as Hittite.

[9] E.g. T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov: *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*, p. 454.

[10] Hindi *lākh*, Sanskrit *lakṣa* means "100,000". The derivation may be analogous to that of the Chinese character *wan*, "10,000", which depicts an ant, hence "bristling anthill", "uncountably many".

the fact that Sir Mortimer Wheeler dug up Harappan cities did not by itself give him the competence to interpret his findings in terms of *Ved*ic or non-*Ved*ic culture. Linguists and archaeologists and other experts in their respective fields ought to give a hearing to specialists in neglected aspects of the evidence, starting with *Ved*ic studies.

But the funny part of the problem is the numerous cases where scholars don't see the import of data even when these are presented to them. Thus, during question time after his lecture, I heard a prominent invasionist scholar explain to someone who brought up the evidence of the Saraswatī having dried up and thereby providing a *terminus ante quem* for the Saraswatī-centred *Ṛg-Veda*, that "the Saraswatī didn't disappear completely, for it is still mentioned in *Sūtra* texts ca. 600 BC". He did not realize that the whole chronology of *Ved*ic literature is at stake here, and that the conventional date of the *Sūtra* literature should not be taken for granted. Indeed, non-invasionists claim precisely that the *Sūtra* literature was largely produced during the Harappan period, before 2,000 BC, when the Saraswatī was still a mighty river. The thing to do here is not to address stray remarks but to first acquaint oneself with the complete version of history as conceived by the opposing side.

6.2 THINGS TO DO

6.2.1 The archaeological job

Not being an archaeologist, I do not want to evaluate the *status quaestionis* of the archaeological search for IE origins. All I can do is note that the archaeologists themselves don't seem to have mapped out the trail of the early Indo-Europeans in South and Central Asia with a convincing amount of detail. Asko Parpola and Bernard Sergent have made a valiant attempt, and invasionists are hopeful that if pursued further, these efforts should lead to the definitive proof of the AIT. However, we have seen that the interpretation which Parpola and Sergent give to the crucial Bactrian Bronze Age culture as Indo-Āryan is uncertain, and that their own data could better support the identification of that culture as Iranian. More importantly, we have seen that they have not succeeded in getting the Bactrians into India, i.e. in proving an actual migration of people and of a culture into India.

The Bactrian Bronze Age culture is a rather late affair in IE history, which started at least 3,000 years earlier. The focus should be on the origins of the Kurgan culture in ca. 5000 BC. There is sufficient evidence to conclude provisionally that it originated in Asia, to the east of the Caspian Sea, e.g. Russian scholar N. Merpert traces the Kurgan culture to the "Volga-Ural region, developing there under the influence of Neolithic cultures of the south-east Caspian zone".[11] And where do we go back to from there? If India is

[11]Paraphrase by J. P. Mallory: "The chronology of the early Kurgan tradition", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1977/4, p. 339, with reference to a Russian article by N. Merpert, Moscow 1974.

the homeland of the IE family, there should be traces of a cultural expansion or migration from India to the Caspian region around 5,000 BC, the pre-*Ved*ic age.

Another thing to do is to dig up the ancient settlements in the Gaṅgā basin. Unlike the mighty Indus-Saraswatī cities, these won't be readily visible, nor are they easily accessible as abandoned ruins: many of them lie underneath bustling cities. But there, as much as in the Harappan area, a very important part of India's (and possibly the Indo-European language family's) history lies waiting for discovery.

6.2.2 Literary testimony to Harappan decline

If it is true that Harappan civilization was prominently Indo-Āryan and that much of Sanskrit literature was written in the Harappan period, then a certain chronological stage in this literary tradition should correspond to the decline and ruination of the Harappan cities. So far, the only literary reference to this process that I've heard of, is a *Mahābhārata* line mentioning the sinking and drying up of the Saraswatī river, and attributing it to the goddess's disgust with the decline in moral and cultural standards among the population. That hardly suffices as literary testimony to such a vast civilizational crisis as the abandonment of the Harappan cities. So, this will become an object of mockery for the skeptics, unless the non-invasionists meet the challenge and present the literary evidence.

6.2.3 Let us keep on doubting

One thing which keeps on astonishing me in the present debate is the complete lack of doubt in both camps. Personally, I don't think that either theory, of Āryan invasion and of Āryan indigenousness, can claim to have been "proven" by prevalent standards of proof; even though one of the contenders is getting closer. Indeed, while I have enjoyed pointing out the flaws in the AIT statements of the politicized Indian academic establishment and its American amplifiers, I cannot rule out the possibility that the theory which they are defending may still have its merits.

On both sides, I have seen so much self-satisfaction, the conceit of the academic establishment disdaining the contributions of "amateurs", the bad faith among the Indian Marxists dismissing every word uttered by "Hindu chauvinists", the triumphalism among the non-invasionists about having exposed "the myth of the Āryan invasion". Many seem to think that all the questions have been answered, that only mad or evil people can still adhere to the rivalling school of thought, so that there is also no need to listen to their objections; but what I see is that at least many parts of the question are still waiting for an answer.

For example, the non-invasionists should recognize the merits in the invasionist skepticism of the horse evidence found in the Harappan cities. It is one thing for Prof. B. B. Lal (one of those healthy doubters who only came to dismiss the "myth of the Āryan invasion" gradually) to cite recent finds of horse bones as proving that "the horse was duly known to

the Harappans" and to quote archaeozoologist Prof. Sandor Bokonyi as confirming that the horses found in Surkotada were indeed horses (which some had refused to believe due to their AIT bias), and that "the domestic nature of the Surkotada horses is undoubtful".[12] It is another to deduce that the horse was simply part of Harappan life rather than an exotic curiosity; AIT defenders have a point when they maintain that the horse was not part of the Harappan lifestyle the way it was in the Kurgan culture. More work is to be done, both in digging and incorrectly interpreting the data.

Likewise, invasionists reproach non-invasionists for disregarding the fact of kinship between IE languages, and for behaving as if the presence of IE languages in both India and Europe needs no explanation. They really have a point: most Indian publications focus exclusively on Indian history, and show absolutely no interest in explaining how, if IE was native to India, it made its way to distant countries. True, research is also guided by the actual facts which are being discovered, i.c. findings in India which undermine the AIT, so it is normal to focus on India. But a scholar must not be satisfied with giving *some* answers; he must aim for a theory which answers *all* relevant questions.

6.3 THE NON-INVASIONIST MODEL

The emerging alternative to the Āryan Invasion Theory may be summarized as follows. In the 6th millennium BC, the Proto-Indo-Europeans were living in what is now Panjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, speaking a variety of mutually comprehensible dialects, and tending cattle as well as practising agriculture. Due to demographic growth, internal conflicts and the occasional economic crisis, some of them moved out through the Khyber pass to Margiana and Bactria, which was to remain a frontier zone of Indian culture for millennia. From there, some of them moved on to the Caspian coast, while others moved east to become the Tokharians. During this stay in Central Asia, they adapted to the local way of life, growing millet and domesticating the horse, a skill which was soon communicated back to the motherland. The group which separated earliest from the rest was the one which took the oldest form of the IE language along: we encounter them by 2,000 BC in Anatolia.

The next move of the IE settlers in Central Asia, by 4,500 BC, brought them across the Urals and the Volga into Europe. By internal development and because of interaction with ever new native populations, their dialects changed and differentiated. Expanding ever more westward and southward, they broke into the Old European civilization of the Balkans and overran Anatolia. Another group developed its own distinctive culture in northern Central Europe, and was poised to overrun Western Europe and the British Isles.

[12] Sandor Bokonyi: letter to the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, 13-12-1993, quoted in B. B. Lal: *The Myth of Aryan Invasion: Some Reflections on the Authorship of the Harappan Civilization*, inaugural address delivered at the Second International Conference of the World Association for *Ved*ic Studies, Los Angeles, 7-8-1998.

Meanwhile in India, civilization made great strides, writing was invented ca. 3500 BC (unfortunately too late for the emigrants to take along), astronomy perfected, cities built of ever greater urbanistic quality. The language, still spoken only in a limited area, had developed the characteristic traits of Indo-Iranian, except in some outlying regions where older forms of IE were preserved, among them Proto-Bangani. Priests composed hymns to the gods and learned the hymns composed by their teachers and colleagues by heart, accumulating a tradition known as *Veda*.

In the northern Indus basin, the Indo-Iranians started fighting amongst each other, and one result was that several factions followed the beaten track to Afghanistan and beyond. We meet them in history as the Iranians, who had built strongholds in Bactria whence their adventurers trekked north and then east as well as west, turning the whole of Central Asia into an Iranian Lebensraum; much later, they also conquered the countries to the west and southwest as far as Mesopotamia. They often clashed with the Indians, who had just reached the apogee of civilization with their large and numerous well-planned cities, and who tried to gain control over the Afghan mining centres. Later, perhaps already as a result of the crisis which sounded the death-knell of the magnificiant Harappan cities, more people migrated from India to become the West-Asian Indo-Āryans. Having moved through Margiana to the south side of the Caspian Sea, they mixed with Hurrites, Kassites and others, and pushed as far west as Palestine, making their mark for a few centuries (18^{th}-12^{th} century BC) in different parts of West Asia before disappearing through assimilation,

In the southern Indus-Saraswatī basin, the Indo-Āryans met the Dravidians whom they assimilated. However, Dravidian language and culture were preserved thanks to Dravidian colonists who had started settling in the south, in their turn assimilating the Veddoid and other native tribals. In a parallel movement, Indo-Āryans were colonizing India's interior, assimilating the tribals they encountered, except in the less accessible corners where they left them to their traditional way of life. This movement from the northwest to the rest of India accelerated with the decline of the Harappan cities, yielding essentially the very distribution of languages over the Indian territory which exists till today.

This model will certainly need amendments and corrections, but it is better able to explain the data than the dominant Kurgan-to-India invasionist model.

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